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DEFENSE REPORTER**

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**SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE AND THE LOCAL  
DEFENSE REPORTER**

by

**JULIA H. SCOTT, B.A.**

**THESIS**

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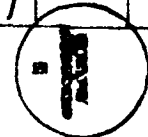
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## **ABSTRACT**

### **SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE AND THE LOCAL DEFENSE REPORTER**

**by**

**JULIA H. SCOTT, B.A.**

**SUPERVISING PROFESSOR: STEPHEN D. REESE, Ph. D.**

As newspaper reporters become increasingly specialized, they need greater specialized knowledge. However, little research has been accomplished on specialty reporters, their performance and their sources. This study analyzed the relationship between specialized knowledge and the performance of reporters covering one specialty in particular, the U.S. military. A national telephone survey of defense reporters and military public affairs officers was conducted to determine if reporters' specialized knowledge affects their perception of news quality, their rapport with their sources and the diversity of their news gathering routines. Another of the survey's goals was to note whether the complexity of a newspaper specialty affects the reporter's perceived need for specialized knowledge.

While the first three suppositions were not strongly supported, survey results did challenge preconceived assumptions about the relationship between the press and the military. While past research has

indicated strong differences between the press and military mentality, the survey revealed that defense reporters and public affairs officers are similar in many respects and that the majority of both perceive that they share cooperative relationships.

Where one might expect that a reporter with more specialized knowledge would enjoy a more positive relationship with sources, this study suggests increased knowledge brings increased skepticism.

The survey also reinforces that there is no standard defense specialty. The existence of a dedicated defense beat reporter at a particular newspaper may not depend on military presence in the community as much as philosophies of newspaper management.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Today's world, in light of the influence of mass media, has been metaphorically called a "global village."<sup>1</sup> Due to advances in communications technology, words and images are electronically transferred within minutes across oceans and around the globe. The stock broker on Wall Street and the painter on Champs Elysees can simultaneously hear the same radio broadcast or view the same photograph.

Such innovations are unifying because they have brought cultures, lifestyles and concerns together to absorb the same information; however, ironically, the sophistication of today's mass media has also fostered a diversity of interests.

Although mass media have motivated some sharing of thoughts among diverse peoples, today's publics are not purely homogeneous. In fact, as journalist Ben Bagdikian wrote, modern audiences are "collection[s] of specialists."<sup>2</sup>

It takes only a single flip through the television channels to discover numerous programs targeted to a variety of audiences. News commentaries, educational specials, music television and sitcoms are but

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<sup>1</sup> Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co, 1964), p.5.

<sup>2</sup> Ben Bagdikian, *The Effete Conspiracy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 9.

a few of the kinds of programs that attract assorted facets of the viewing audience. The abundance of specialty magazines in print reflects readerships with regional interests ranging from *Texas Highways*<sup>3</sup> to *Paris Match*,<sup>4</sup> and subject interests ranging from high finance to jogging. The newspaper provides another example of mass media appealing to a "mass" that is actually divided. Readers often choose to read *USA Today* (the newspaper currently showing the second highest national newspaper circulation)<sup>5</sup> because of its concise coverage of numerous subjects. As "the" newspaper of this technologically sophisticated age, it highlights its sections colorfully and graphically. It appeals to the masses by appealing to amassed branches.

To appeal to its expanding and diversified audiences, news production has evolved. Author Douglas Cater wrote that in order for the mass media to meet the demands of their audiences, "News production for the hungry American public has become an instantaneous, continuous, many-faceted and layered operation."<sup>6</sup>

Not only have the number of journalists increased by over 60 percent since the 1970s,<sup>7</sup> but, to meet the variety of audience demands, journalists, themselves, have become focused on specific subject areas. It is rare, for example, that the same writers contribute to different sections of

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<sup>3</sup> *Texas Highways*, Published by Texas State Department of Highways and Public Transportation.

<sup>4</sup> *Paris Match*, Published by Publications Filipachi.

<sup>5</sup> 1989 *Editor & Publisher Int'l Year Book*, Vol. 122(New York: Ed & Pub. Co. 1989), p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Cater, *Fourth Branch of Government* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), pp. 2-3.

<sup>7</sup> David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Wilhoit, *The American Journalist: A Portrait of U.S. News People and Their Work* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 13.

the newspaper. Often different writers are assigned different sections of the newspaper, regions of the community or agencies within government. While writers, as journalists, are expected to be able to write about a variety of subjects, today's journalists often must be able to report as specialists.

Since it seems the newspaper reporter is a "journalist" first before becoming a "specialist," I question whether modern journalistic specialists are effectively reporting about complex specialized issues to their segmented audiences. For example, it is questionable whether an agriculture reporter, who has never worked on a farm, can report comprehensively about the planting cycle, the best hybrid seeds to plant, and so on. However, this agricultural information is of great importance to the farmer. The medical field is increasingly technical today. It is questionable whether a medical or science writer, without specialized knowledge on medicine, can report about medical innovations as they fit into a larger scientific context. The U.S. military is a field where related news events may involve sophisticated weaponry or national politics -- issues that are difficult to grasp for civilian laymen, including the journalist without specialized military knowledge.

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this study is to determine the part specialized knowledge plays in effective reporting about one newspaper specialty in particular. The emphasized specialty is military affairs, or local defense

issues, as reported about in large American daily newspapers throughout the country.

The U.S. military, over two million members strong, is merely part of an expansive defense complex, developing increasingly complicated and expensive weapon systems and other technology. This complexity requires reporters to understand military terminology, scientific technology, governmental policy and military missions and customs. Yet, I question whether the typical journalistic "specialist" on military affairs is knowledgeable enough to provide reportage of the caliber he and his sources (within the defense establishment) deem adequate.

I examine whether specialized knowledge influences defense reporters' performance, as indicated by the quality of their military reportage, their relationships with sources and their chosen news gathering routines. I also analyze whether the complexity of a specialty (also called "beat") -- the military beat in this case -- affects the amount of specialized knowledge a reporter considers necessary to write effectively.

According to author Dan Nimmo,<sup>8</sup> to study news gathering is to examine both the press and its sources, the news gatherers and the information dispensers, whose work is intertwined in the reporting process. In this study, reporter performance is thus examined from two sides of the news gathering process, that of the reporters and of the sources. The specialized knowledge of defense reporters at American

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<sup>8</sup> Dan D. Nimmo, *Newsgathering in Washing: A Study in Political Communication* (New York: Atherton Press, 1964), p. 120.

daily newspapers is analyzed, and the studied "sources" are military public affairs officers (PAOs) of local military installations.

Information is obtained through qualitative research, specifically archival and participant observation methods, and quantitative research in the form of a telephone survey.

## Chapter 2

### Theoretical Statements

A PAO for an Air Force base located in a large midwestern city was explaining various aspects of her job to a new employee:

This base makes a greater economic impact on the community than any other local industry. Also we deal with the largest media market in our command. However, we rarely have contact with local newspapers. When military beat reporters do phone for updates, they do not seem to understand or have much interest in what we do out here.<sup>9</sup>

The above quandary is echoed by a number of media liaisons within governmentally-related organizations throughout this country. Public relations practitioners sometimes question the ability of reporters to produce quality reportage regarding a subject about which they know little. If specialization is a legitimate newspaper trend, it would logically follow that "specialty" reporters would be more interested and knowledgeable about their subjects than general reporters. However, reporter inattention, exemplified in the quotation above, indicates otherwise.

Linked to this quandary, the following research questions are fundamental to this study (To avoid confusion, the male pronoun is used in singular references): **Who exactly is the "typical" defense**

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<sup>9</sup> Through participant observation, event recalled by author, who was interviewing her supervisor, Capt. Mary Hitt, Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado, August 1985.

reporter? Does he possess specialized knowledge about defense? Is defense a complex beat which requires more specialized knowledge than other beats? Does specialized knowledge enhance defense reporters' work and relations with PAOs?

The four guiding hypotheses for this study (H1 through H4) are derived from these research questions.

**H1: The more specialized knowledge a military beat reporter has, the more positively he and his military counterparts (PAOs) will evaluate his reportage quality.**

Specialized knowledge is the primary concept address in H1 and the following hypotheses. It is the independent variable in three of the hypotheses and the dependent variable in H3.

"Knowledge," a broad term, serves as a focal variable in numerous studies. One dictionary defined the term as "acquaintance with facts, truths, principles.... Familiarity or conversance.... Familiarity gained by...experience.... State of knowing.... Awareness."<sup>10</sup> The term, knowledge, encompasses a large area; however, for purposes here, the concept is narrowed to "specialized knowledge" in the context of the newspaper specialty reporter. Taking cues from the dictionary definition above, I explore the specialty reporter's "acquaintance" and "familiarity" with facts pertaining to his beat. Empirical indicators of knowledge are

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<sup>10</sup> *Random House Dictionary of the English Language*, 2d ed. (New York: Random House, 1987, p. 1064.



used to determine whether specialized knowledge influences reporter performance as perceived by reporters and PAOs.

"Perceived news quality" is the dependent variable for H1.

Presumably, a reporter's specialized knowledge affects the quality of his reportage, as perceived by himself and his military counterpart (the local PAO). In order to determine if specialized knowledge affects news quality, one goal of this study is to examine perceptions of "quality journalism" to see if there is a relationship between news quality and specialized knowledge. Scholars have studied attributes such as objectivity, accuracy and other concepts, which will make up the operational definition for news quality described later.

**H2: The more specialized knowledge a military beat reporter has, the better the professional rapport between the reporter and his sources (local PAOs).**

In H2, the dependent variable involves, not evaluation of reportage content (news quality) of H1, but another aspect of reporter performance presumably affected by specialized knowledge. While H1 is theoretically stated to answer the question, "Does a reporter's specialized knowledge affect the content of his work?," H2 theoretically transforms the question, "Does a reporter's specialized knowledge affect his relationship with his sources?"

The intent of H2 is not to attach a positive or negative evaluation on the reporter-PAO relationship, for that could be confusing. What is a positive aspect to one party in the relationship could be viewed negatively

to another. For example, while one reporter might consider a "positive relationship" a cooperative one, another might believe an adversarial relation is more "positive" because it allows him to detach himself from the subject and write more objectively. The intent of H2 is to determine the relationship between specialized knowledge and the "professional rapport" between local defense reporters and their PAO counterparts. Good rapport indicates a smooth process of news gathering -- obtaining as much information as possible -- and enhanced reporter performance.

**H3: The more complex the beat reporter considers his beat, the more specialized knowledge he believes is required.**

Newspaper specialization evolved partly because of increasing numbers of reported subjects (beats), and the consequential need for reporters who are expert on these subjects. The contention of H3 is that these "expert" reporters require specialized knowledge, especially in reporting about complex issues.

**H4: The more specialized knowledge a military beat reporter has, the more diverse his news gathering routines will be.**

The definition of knowledge given earlier is taken further in H4. Reporters who are "acquainted with facts" can also become more resourceful in knowing where to obtain facts or information. In other words, the techniques or routine channels by which they obtain information ( such as the interview technique or the press conference channel) presumably become more varied with increasing specialized

knowledge. In other words, the beat reporter with specialized knowledge may be aware of many avenues offering information about his subject. For the journalist, research resourcefulness can be as useful in reporting as background knowledge on a general subject. A good beat journalist, having no background (specialized knowledge) pertaining to a particular beat story, may, nevertheless, possess knowledge about a variety of places to obtain reliable information. His specialized knowledge affects his research performance.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Literature Review**

A scarcity of studies exists regarding the "specialized knowledge" of "beat" reporters. However, many studies (mostly qualitative research) about how the press and journalists have become more specialized. A connection can be drawn between newspaper specialization and expected journalist expertise in subjects reported.

This chapter is arranged according to the order of the hypothetical statements presented in Chapter 2. The first section, about newspaper specialization, incorporates literature providing a background for the primary independent variable, specialized knowledge. Next, the dependent variables for H1, H2 and H4, and the independent variable for H3 are discussed. The final section centers on the specialized newspaper reporter and his need for specialized knowledge.

#### **Evolution of Newspaper Specialization and Expansion**

The early journalists of this century were generalists, whose primary expertise lay in relating a range of events occurring in some township. Publishing a newspaper was considered a one-person activity.<sup>11</sup> Since the early colonial paper was in essence a medium for disseminating town

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<sup>11</sup>

Leon V. Sigal, *Reporters and Officials* (Lexington, Mass.: D.C. Heath & Co., 1973), p. 7.

gossip,<sup>12</sup> the "specialized knowledge" of early journalist-printers pertained to the "specialty" of newspapering and the distribution process, more than to the subjects about which they wrote. Authors Weaver and Wilhoit said, "Early printer-journalists seemed to be known more for their mechanical ability than for their intellect."<sup>13</sup>

As time passed, more cognitive attributes were attached to the newspaper producer and to the concept of news. The "naive empiricist,"<sup>14</sup> who had believed in the ability to report pure information, evolved into the skeptic, aware of the requisite to report news only as seen through personal perceptual filters. As public relations pioneer, Ivy Lee, once said, "All I can do is give you my interpretation of the facts."<sup>15</sup> The journalist's specialized knowledge, or knowledge surrounding the "facts," would obviously color his interpretations, and therefore, his reportage.

Changes in the concept of news accompanied changes and growth of news organizations. News staffs have grown far beyond yesterday's one-person shop. Research indicated that in the 1970s, the New York Times employed more than 6,000 people, and the Washington Post employed more than 2100.<sup>16</sup> Leo Bogart wrote that there are 457,500 employees in the American newspaper business today.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Weaver and Wilhoit, *American Journalist*, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Schudson. *Discovering the News* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 141.

<sup>15</sup> Ivy Lee, *Publicity* (New York: Industries Publishing 1925) p. 21.

<sup>16</sup> Sigal, *Reporters and Officials*, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Leo Bogart, *Press and Republic: Who Reads What, When, Where, and Why in American Newspapers*, 2d ed. (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc., 1989), p. 3.

The expansion of news organizations coincided with increased categorization of functions within them. Although he referred specifically to the Washington press, Cater noted the change in the reporting process for the news correspondent: "His business, like most big business, has become specialized, compartmentalized, channelized, even routinized to a degree that would shock his predecessor of a few decades ago."<sup>18</sup>

### Reporter Specialization

The reporting function of news processing is one area that has undergone categorization. Spencer Crump listed five modern types of reporters:<sup>19</sup> beat, general assignment (GA), special assignment, investigative and rewrite.

While the GA reporter traditionally covers a variety of story assignments, from fires to floods, the beat reporter has served as the in-house "expert" on his subject. By continually monitoring a particular beat, such as the police station or the mayor's office, he became acquainted with people connected to his beat, and he was then able to compose articles with "knowledge, authority and continuity."<sup>20</sup>

As newspaper topics receiving continuous reportage mounted, the notion of the "beat" evolved. Sociologist Herbert Gans suggested there

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<sup>18</sup> Cater, *Fourth Branch*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>19</sup> Spencer Crump, *Newsgathering and Reporting for the 1980s and Beyond: The New Fundamentals of Journalism* (Corona del Mar, Calif.: Trans-Anglo Publication Co., 1981), p. 77.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

have emerged more than one type of newspaper beat.<sup>21</sup> The "locational" beat, covering a specific region or agency, refers to the traditional beat reporter, who leaves his office to, for example, cover City Council meetings or peruse court records. Yet, an upsurge in reportage on technological advancements, political machines and other products of modern society has required the need for another type of beat. The "substantive" beat covers subject areas such as education and environment. This beat implies the existence of a "specialty" reporter, who has a wider, more interpretive, scope of specialized knowledge than other types of reporters.

Describing the reporter breakdown at the *Los Angeles Times*, author David Shaw described the "special writers,"<sup>22</sup> who are deemed experts with in-depth knowledge they have gathered from training and research. One example of a *Los Angeles Times* "special writer" is Russell Chandler; he was a religion reporter as well as an ordained minister.<sup>23</sup> Lawrence Altman, a medical writer at the *New York Times*, had earned a medical degree.<sup>24</sup>

The number of substantive beats, according to Gans, "have increased manifold in the last twenty years...."<sup>25</sup> Under the "metro" section of the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*, for example, there are 16 general assignment reporters in addition to other reporters specializing in the

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<sup>21</sup> Herbert Gans, *Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek, and Time* (New York: Vantage Books, 1980), pp. 131-2.

<sup>22</sup> David Shaw, *Press Watch* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1984), p. 111.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Gans, *Deciding What's News*, p. 132.

police beat, higher/public school education, environment, religion, medicine and politics.<sup>26</sup> The *Dallas Morning News* lists a similar specialty breakdown with some variation. For example, it designates a separate specialty for reportage about the AIDS illness.<sup>27</sup>

Specialization exists at most large dailies, yet there exists no universal "beat" breakdown.<sup>28</sup> This may be due to the fact that little guidance or research on newspaper management standards has been provided this century, except for on small newspapers.<sup>29</sup>

Authors have suggested the increase in newspaper specialization is due to a continually modified concept of "news" and an audience demand for analysis and perspective. One reporter for the *Dallas Morning News* contended, "The basic 'who, what, when, where, why' traditional standard of news reporting leaves holes in meaning. People want to know related to 'why'."<sup>30</sup> Herbert Brucker wrote that external events in "a world that is infinitely subtle and complex" have forced the press away from "4-W" journalism.<sup>31</sup>

For whatever reason, the research reveals a growing trend away from a traditionally generalist ("straight news") approach toward a specialist ("interpretive and analytical") approach.

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<sup>26</sup> From author's telephone survey of Texas defense reporters, April 1989.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Gerald Stone, *Examining Newspapers* (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1987), p. 77.

<sup>30</sup> Interview (telephone) with Katherine Jones, defense writer for *Dallas Morning News*, April 1989.

<sup>31</sup> Herbert Brucker, *Communication is Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.



### Opposing Viewpoints About Specialization

Not all journalists agree that specialization and specialized knowledge make for better reporting. Stephen Hess, for example, allying with the generalist approach to journalism, said "...Specialized training is the antithesis of mass communication."<sup>32</sup>

Reporters avoid specialties, stated Hess,<sup>33</sup> because of such problems as limits to promotion possibilities, tendencies toward reporting bias, "tunnel vision," "elitism," and jargon-laden writing.

Another problem for the specialist reporter is the risk associated with continual reliance on particular sources. By fostering harmony in relationship to sources, the reporter risks co-optation by the source. While increasing his specialized knowledge, the reporter, in Sigal's words, "gradually absorbs the perspectives of the senior officials he is covering."<sup>34</sup> Sigal contended this "absorption" results in "beat parochialism."<sup>35</sup>

The viewpoint against specialized reporting is opposed by a number of people who champion the trend for various reasons. Shaw, one such advocate, asserted that this is the "age of specialization" and that "the world has become too complex for the generalist approach."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Stephen Hess, *The Washington Reporters* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institute, 1981), p. 129.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p. 64.

<sup>34</sup> Sigal, *Reporters and Officials*, p. 47.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.* p. 48.

<sup>36</sup> Shaw, *Press Watch*, p. 113.

Some believe specialization in newspapers leads to greater reporting accuracy. W. A. Tillinghast's conclusions from his study on reporters, their sources and stories<sup>37</sup> confirms this opinion:

Sources say beat reporters, perhaps because of their expertise or because sources know them, make fewer study errors; sources are likely to claim error in non-beat stories.<sup>38</sup>

### Perceived Quality of News Reportage - Dependent Variable for H1

The Tillinghast study above focused on accuracy in reporting. However, an accurately written article will not be considered a "quality" piece unless it also meets other journalistic requirements or conventions.

Gans named three categories of consideration for deciding the suitability of a story.<sup>39</sup> His substantive category refers to an article's content -- its importance and interest. The product category includes the "goodness" of a story in line with its medium, format, novelty, balance and quality. Under the "quality" division of the "product" category, Gans includes considerations regarding a story's action, pace, completeness and clarity. Gans' third category, competitive considerations, has to do with a story's appeal as compared with other media. All of the considerations overlap, and some carry more weight for other authors in deciding the value of a story.

<sup>37</sup> W.A. Tillinghast, "Source Control and Evaluation of Newspaper Inaccuracies," *Newspaper Research Journal*, 5, no. 1 (1983).

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>39</sup> Gans, *Deciding What's News*, pp. 146-81.

Nimmo categorized news values as well: accuracy, comprehensiveness, interest to reader, utility to reader, utility to originating agency and topicality.<sup>40</sup> From his survey of news reporters and PAOs, Nimmo reported that both groups agreed accuracy and comprehensiveness are essentials of a good news story. "Reader interest" was emphasized by newsmen, while PAOs, highlighted "reader utility."

In line with their views on accuracy, PAOs emphasized the importance of reporters' knowledge and their ability to report accurately. Nimmo quoted one PAO, who said, "Experience and knowledge of the programs, many of which are infinitely complicated, are essential; he (the news person) has to know what he is writing about."<sup>41</sup> Nimmo added, "The reporter in a technological age needs brains as well as shoe leather and subway fare."<sup>42</sup>

A description of news quality would be incomplete without consideration of what journalists consider a central element of good reporting -- objectivity. While an exhaustive analysis of objectivity is beyond the scope of this study, it is important to note its part in journalism. Sigal stated objectivity is a primary journalistic convention that standardized news reporting.<sup>43</sup> Gaye Tuchman said, objectivity is

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<sup>40</sup> Nimmo, *Newsgathering in Washington*, p. 120

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>43</sup> Sigal, *Reporters and Officials*, p. 66.

journalists' "strategic ritual" which helps shelter them from criticism.<sup>44</sup>

Writing objectively is an enduring journalistic practice which has generated expectations of "fairness" (the right to be heard) and "balance" (presenting both sides of an issue).

Authors have noted that it is difficult to write objectively, for "facts" are influenced by the reporter's value judgments. Stated Tuchman, "...notions that a newsman takes for granted are actually a picture of his view of social and political reality."<sup>45</sup> Tuchman claimed an objective presentation of straight "facts" is always subject to reporter interpretation.

While specialization developed to achieve "expert" and accurate reportage about various subjects, the defense specialty, a case-in-point, suggests accuracy, objectivity and a host of other components comprising "quality news reportage" are difficult to achieve.

A canvassing of defense reporters in Texas<sup>46</sup> revealed it is difficult to write objectively and accurately about defense for many reasons. Most of these reasons can be categorized under two areas, the historical conflict between the defense and journalistic establishments and the complexity of the defense subject.

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<sup>44</sup> Gaye Tuchman, "Objectivity as a Strategic Ritual: An Examination of Newsmen's Notions of Objectivity," *American Journal of Sociology* 78 (January): 660-679.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* p. 675.

<sup>46</sup> From author's telephone canvassing of Texas newspaper defense reporters, April 1989.

### Reporter-Subject Relationship - Dependent Variable for H2

The press-defense relationship shows at a macro-level what the local defense beat reporter and PAO relationship narrows to a micro-view.

### ***Press vs. Military -- Conflicting Natures***

To study the military and press relationship is to become enmeshed in the fundamental conflicts between the journalistic and military mentalities. The often adversarial relationship between the two establishments has been clouded with tension.

While the press allies with "freedom of information" and the public's "right to know," the military allies with national security and the legal obligation to keep some information secret. While news reporters "ferret out differences of opinion in the bureaucratic structure," the Department of Defense strives to "speak with one voice."<sup>47</sup> News management may shun reporters with ideological interests in favor of value-free reportage. The military, on the other hand, attracts recruits who internalize traditional national values.

Reporters, seeking a quick-breaking story to publish before deadline, are often frustrated with military procedures that require responses from numerous levels in its hierarchy. Consequently, the press may view the military as lethargic, while the military may consider the

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<sup>47</sup> Adam Yarmolinsky, *The Military Establishment: Its Impacts on American Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 214.

press harried -- more interested in the dollar or a competitive edge than in national security.

The conflict between the government and the press institutions parallels the conflict between individual officials and reporters, who, according to Cater, are "moved by fundamentally different compulsions."<sup>48</sup>

The relationship between the defense beat reporter and the PAO parallels at a micro-level the larger relationship between the defense establishment and the press. Each party possesses different goals; "...As the newsman sometimes manufactures news, the information officer is accused of manufacturing information," said Nimmo.<sup>49</sup> Bagdikian wrote, "PR men are paid to prevent exposure of the client when he is in trouble; the press is paid to do precisely the opposite."<sup>50</sup>

Given the basic conflicting motivations of each side, the military beat reporter may be faced with a more difficult challenge than some other beat reporters. Thus, it seems specialized knowledge is necessary to overcome dissension in this problematic relationship; specialized knowledge could enhance reporters' credibility and perhaps ingratiate them to the PAOs.

### **Beat Complexity -- Independent Variable for H3**

Reporting about defense is not only obstructed by the adversarial nature of the relationship between press and the military, but by obstacles

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<sup>48</sup> Cater, *Fourth Branch*, p. 17.

<sup>49</sup> Nimmo, *Newsgathering in Washington*, p. 129.

<sup>50</sup> Bagdikian, *Effete Conspiracy*, p. 39.

inherent in the military system. These obstacles contribute to the complexity of the defense beat.

Author Richard Fryklund listed the over-classification of documents, source turnover and time constraints among the problems for the press reporting about the military.<sup>51</sup> Other journalists complain about the military's reputation for slow answers<sup>52</sup> and its sometimes incomprehensible jargon.<sup>53</sup>

A key impediment is the complexity of the military subject. One author wrote, "Sometimes the sheer complexity of the [defense] issues defeats press spokesmen and reporters alike."<sup>54</sup> A journalist for *U.S. News & World Report* asserted the following:

The problem is that the really important stories tend to be the most complex, the stories that are really easy to grasp tend to be the least important. But those are the ones that tend to be done.<sup>55</sup>

The research suggests that defense is difficult to cover. Given the press' "reluctance to take on complex issues,"<sup>56</sup> this has important implications for the press. It would follow that the defense reporter who covers his beat capably is more than a good journalistic writer. He also

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<sup>51</sup> Richard Fryklund, "Covering the Defense Establishment," *The Press in Washington: 16 Top Newsmen Tell How the News is Collected, Written and Communicated from the World's Most Important Capital* (New York: Dodd-Mead, 1966), p. 180.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Sims, *The Pentagon Reporters* (Washington D.C. Ft. Lesley J. McNair, National Defense University Press, 1983), p. 19).

<sup>53</sup> Yarmolinsky, *Military Establishment*, p. 218.

<sup>54</sup> Michael R. Gordon, "Uneasy Truce Prevails Between Pentagon and Reporters Who Cover Defense News," *National Journal*, February 16, 1985, p. 366.

<sup>55</sup> Reprinted from *U.S. News & World Report*, Gordon, "Uneasy Truce," p. 366.

<sup>56</sup> Gans, *Deciding What's News*, p. 151.

possesses knowledge pertaining to his subject, and he is acquainted with the methods of overcoming the obstacles particular to his beat.

#### News Gathering Routine Diversity -- Dependent Variable for H4

It is doubtful a dictionary's synonym for knowledge would ever include the word, resourcefulness. However, it seems that resourcefulness is a natural spin-off from increased knowledge. A defense reporter may not be cognizant of the price of a weapon system, for example, but his familiarity with his beat may lead him to a military weapons officer or a weapons budget plan having helpful information. Sources take the form of people (such as defense officials or other reporters) or reference materials (such as trade journals or Department of Defense directories).

Journalists can tap a number of methods to obtain and clarify information about the military. Sigal categorized reporter news gathering techniques into three "*channels:*" *routine, informal and enterprise*.<sup>57</sup> "Routine" channels encompass "official proceedings," press releases and conferences and "nonspontaneous events." "Informal" channels refer to less "up-front" methods, such as leaks and information from unofficial sources. "Enterprise" reporting involves the reporter's own initiative and interpretation (such as the interview technique).

Nimmo reported 76 percent of the newsmen preferred the interviewing method of research, a method preferred by none of the

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<sup>57</sup> Sigal, *Reporters and Officials*, p. 120.



surveyed PAOs.<sup>58</sup> The news release, however, was preferred by the majority of the PAOs and none of the reporters.

Hess' survey of reporters concluded that reporters prefer the interview over document research, which they considered "dull."<sup>59</sup> He suggested the reason for avoidance of document research about complex subjects may be reporters' "lack of training."<sup>60</sup> When lacking familiarity about a subject, the reporter may be compelled to use oral research, relying on "those who are most willing to talk"<sup>61</sup> -- possibly less credible sources of information.

### Specialized Knowledge and the Specialty Reporter

Weaver and Wilhoit's study of a sample of U.S. journalists<sup>62</sup> culminated in a profile of media professionals. They provided such information as the "average" age (typically under 35) and educational field (most often communications-related) of American journalists. Scant research of this type has been undertaken focusing on the specialized (especially military or defense) reporter. However, there is evidence that reporters for some specialties vary from Weaver and Wilhoit's "average." The science specialty reporter, for example, is reportedly older and more educated than the general assignment reporter.<sup>63</sup> Hess reported that

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<sup>58</sup> Nimmo, *Newsgathering in Washington*, pp. 142-150.

<sup>59</sup> Hess, *Washington Reporters*, p. 17.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>62</sup> Weaver and Wilhoit, *American Journalist*.

<sup>63</sup> C.J. Storad, "Who are the Metropolitan Daily Newspaper Science Journalists, and How Do They Work?" *Newspaper Research Journal*, 6:39-48.

specialists in Washington receive more university training than generalists.<sup>64</sup> Robert Sims provided a profile of Pentagon specialty reporters, showing the majority over age 40 with more than 20 years journalism experience.<sup>65</sup>

Evidence shows that some specialty reporters may possess more education or experience than GA reporters; however, literature indicates the possession of specialized knowledge for some reporters is lacking. For example, one energy reporter said, "I have become an 'expert' to the extent that I know the lingo, but this scares me because I don't really understand the technicalities of the subject at all."<sup>66</sup>

It is also doubtful that helping reporters acquire specialized knowledge is considered seriously by news management. Hess reported that the news industry has demonstrated "only modest interest" in mid-career education for its reporters.<sup>67</sup>

There continues to be reports about the frustration felt by some dealing with reporters who lack specialized knowledge. For example, John Swearingen, former CEO for Standard Oil Company, explained:

As a frequent interviewee, I have been struck by the inexperience of many reporters and by their lack of preparation, their ignorance of basic economic principles...<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Hess, *Washington Reporters*, p. 66.

<sup>65</sup> Sims, *Pentagon Reporters*, pp. 139-146.

<sup>66</sup> Hess, *Washington Reporters*.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.* p. 55.

<sup>68</sup> John Swearingen, "Responsibility in Journalism: A Business Perspective," *Chapter in The Responsibilities in Journalism*, ed. Robert Schmuhi (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), p. 101.

Given the dearth of information on specialized knowledge for the specialty reporter, it is appropriate to examine what amount of specialized knowledge actually exists among specialty reporters, and discover whether it affects news quality, reporter-source relationships and reporter resourcefulness. In addition, it is of interest how specialized knowledge relates to beat complexity.

## Chapter 4

### Method

Because one goal of this study was to determine information about individuals -- reporters and PAOs, a telephone survey seemed the logical and most expeditious research method for collecting data. According to Kidder and Judd, the telephone type of survey is the choice interview method in research today.<sup>69</sup>

### The Sample

The sample was divided into two parts -- defense reporters for metropolitan daily newspapers and public affairs personnel (military and civilian) at military installations within the same cities as the listed dailies (Appendix 3).

The sampling process began with an effort to list all U.S. daily newspapers showing a large circulation (more than 75,000). Circulation information was obtained from the *Editor and Publisher Yearbook*<sup>70</sup> and *Gale's Directory*.<sup>71</sup> If each of two newspapers within the same town had circulations totalling 75,000 or more, they were listed separately, unless they had the same editorial staffs.

The next step in the process was determining whether military installations (Air Force, Army, Navy, Marine or Air National Guard) were

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<sup>69</sup> Louise H. Kidder and Charles M. Judd, *Research Methods in Social Relations* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1986), p. 230.

<sup>70</sup> Editor and Publishing Co., *1989 Editor and Publisher International Year Book*, 121 (New York, 1988).

<sup>71</sup> Gale Research Inc., *Gale Directory of Publications*, 120th ed. 1,2 (Detroit, Mich, 1988).

located in the same cities as the listed newspapers. If a large-circulation newspaper was listed, but no base was found within a 45-mile radius, the newspaper name was deleted as a possible sample member. Multiple large-circulation papers located in some cities were each paired, when possible, with local military installations in the same city. When more than one large-circulation newspaper and only one military installation were found within the same city, the same installation was paired with each newspaper. If only one eligible newspaper was located in a city with more than one installation, the largest installation (employing the most personnel) was paired with the listed paper. If several papers and installations were located within the same city, they were arbitrarily paired; however, discussion about both installations was accepted from respondents.

The result was a listing of 108 newspaper names paired with 100 military installation names. (Fewer military names were listed because, when a city had multiple newspapers, a single installation was paired twice.) Eleven of the pairs were deleted during random sampling, reducing the total number of telephoned pairs to 97.

Of the 97 newspapers called, 18 were deleted because when their PAO counterparts were unavailable. Of the 79 newspapers surveyed, 35 used general assignment reporters to cover defense. Consequently, no one was interviewed at those newspapers, and the number of reporters counted was reduced to 44. Of those 44, three reporters were unavailable

(out of town or ill). The final number of defense reporters interviewed was 41, revealing a 93 percent response rate for the survey of reporters.

Above, I mention that 18 of 97 newspapers were not called when their counterpart PAOs were not available. This is not to say the PAOs were ill or out of town. In these 18 cases, the military installations sometimes employed only week-end reservist PAOs or, in some cases, did not hire PAOs at all. Of the 79 PAOs remaining to be surveyed, two were ill or out of town and four were actually ghost PAOs that had already been paired with another newspaper in their town. Their responses were not counted twice. There were only 75 PAOs eligible for the survey, and two were ill or out of town. Consequently, the response rate for the PAOs surveyed was 97 percent (73 surveyed out of 75).

Interviewing took place during business hours beginning September 20, 1989. When calling newspapers, I asked to speak with the reporter who covered local defense or military affairs on a full or part-time basis. When there was no one designated as a defense reporter, I asked to speak with the managing editor. After he indicated that his newspaper used only GAs for defense coverage, I labeled the paper a GA with no reporter respondent available. When calling PAOs, I asked for the public affairs director.

For each telephone call attempt, the interviewer recorded the time, disconnects, corrected telephone numbers and related notes (e.g. call-back messages). Delays, such as busy signals, answering machines or

continuous rings were pursued for 10 days. Then, if no contact was made, the unit name was deleted from the sample listing.

### The Instrument

Two sample groups, defense reporters and PAOs, were questioned. The questionnaire for defense reporters (Appendix 1) includes 12 questions related to reporters' specialized knowledge. In addition, questions concerned reporter evaluations of their newspapers' defense news quality (five questions) and of their professional relationships with local PAOs (seven questions). Reporters were asked for perceptions of defense beat complexity (four questions) and for responses related to their chosen news gathering routines (four questions). Reporters were also asked demographic questions for the purpose of developing a reporter profile similar to others done for other types of reporters (see literature review).

The questionnaire for PAOs (Appendix 2) tapped their perceptions of local defense news coverage (six questions) and evaluations of professional relationships with local military beat reporters (seven questions). PAOs were also asked demographic questions (seven). Educational background questions were more elaborate for the reporters than PAOs, since questions about education operationalized the study's independent variable.

The instrument was pre-tested on three mid-circulation (45,000-70,000) newspapers and corresponding installations.

## Measures

The hypotheses to be tested are reiterated below in abbreviated form:

*H1* Specialized Knowledge > Perceived Reportage Quality

*H2* Specialized Knowledge > Perceived Reporter/PAO Rapport  
Quality

*H3* Beat Complexity > Perceived Specialized Knowledge Need

*H4* Specialized Knowledge > News Gathering Routine Diversity

**Specialized knowledge** -- The theoretical definition is *the defense reporter's acquaintance and familiarity with facts in regard to his specialty*. The following will serve as empirical indicators of defense reporters' specialized knowledge: **military background, journalistic experience, specialty-related training or beat experience, academic field of study, level of education and applied knowledge.**

All but applied knowledge were tested by asking mostly close-ended questions. For example, to tap military experience, reporters were asked, "Have you ever served in the U.S. military? How long?" To determine their major fields of study, they were asked, "What was your major undergraduate field of study?" Their responses to the latter were coded as either journalism-related, military-related or other.

Applied knowledge was tapped by asking reporters questions about military installations near their newspaper offices. For example, they were asked, "What is the name of the closest military installation?"



and "Do you happen to know how many people, military and civilian, are employed out there?" It was assumed that reporters with specialized knowledge would answer the majority of these questions correctly.

**Perceived News Quality** -- The theoretical definition is *evaluation, by military beat reporters and their military counterparts (PAOs), of the reporters' defense coverage*. Operational indicators for perceived news quality were taken from some of Gans' and Nimmo's categories of news values described in the literature review. Specifically, questions focus on reporters' and PAOs' opinions of local defense reportage -- whether it is **interesting, accurate, comprehensive, understandable and objective**. It was presumed these components' ratings could be added into scores representing how defense news is evaluated by both groups.

**Perceived Relationship Rapport Quality** -- This, the dependent variable for the second hypothesis, is theoretically defined as *the evaluation by military beat reporters and PAOs of their professional dealings with one another*. It was operationalized from respondents' **evaluations of their relationships with their counterparts (reporters or PAOs), awareness of their counterparts' identities, trust and respect of counterparts and frequency of contact by both groups**.

**Beat Complexity** -- Since one dictionary incorporates words such as "complicated" and "not easily understood" in its definition and

synonyms of the word, "complex,"<sup>72</sup> the theoretical definition of the independent variable for H3 is the opinion of reporters that the military beat is complicated and, therefore, difficult to report about. The survey questionnaire includes questions about whether specialized knowledge is necessary for reporting about complex beats. Also, questions center on whether reporters consider the subject of defense, itself, to be complex, in light of its barriers to reporting.

**Routine Diversity** -- The dependent variable for H4 is theoretically defined as *a beat reporter's use of varied news gathering (research) methods*. Although survey questions were not ordered solely in accordance with Sigal's categories of research channels (routine, informal and enterprise), they queried how often some techniques from those categories (e.g. interview and press conference) are utilized. Questions operationalized the concept by asking about **how often they used various reporting methods, references and sources**. They also focused on how often reporters used documents for news gathering. While most reporters avoid documentation research, defense reporters, because of the complexity of their subjects, may rely more heavily on documentation than other techniques.

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<sup>72</sup> *American Heritage Illustrated Encyclopedic Dictionary*, (Boston, Mass.: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1987), p. 360.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Results**

The overriding research question of this study asked, "Who is the 'typical' defense reporter?"

The survey of defense reporters revealed a diverse group of people who report about local defense establishments (see Table 1). They range in age from 27 to 85, the majority being in their 30s. Mostly males, they average 13 years newspaper experience and six years experience on their current beats. Over half hold undergraduate college degrees in a field related to journalism or communications. While over half have no military experience, some (12 percent) have over 20 years experience.

The survey confirms for the defense specialty, what the literature revealed about standards of newspaper management in general -- there is no universal beat breakdown. Out of 79 newspapers surveyed, 35 used only general assignment reporters to cover local defense issues (no reporters at those newspapers were interviewed). Of the surveyed newspapers, sixteen employ full-time, and 25 employ part-time defense reporters.

Although 39 percent of the interviewed reporters cover defense full time, only 32 percent of the surveyed reporters considered themselves specialists as opposed to generalists.

Table 2 provides a picture of the surveyed reporters in the form of comparison to American journalists in general and to the population of the

U.S. civilian labor force. Weaver and Wilhoit concluded, from their 1986 study of U.S. news media, that journalism is primarily a young person's career.<sup>73</sup> It appears from Table 2 that the same holds true with defense reporters, who also average in their 30s. However, as with science writers,<sup>74</sup> defense writers are older than the average journalist. They are (again comparable to science writers) slightly more educated, according to Table 3. More of them hold college degrees, and almost twice as many have received graduate training. While more defense reporters ostensibly have graduate degrees, the number surveyed (n=3) too small to warrant graphic presentation.

It is not surprising that more defense reporters majored in military-related fields in college (see Table 4); however, the majority of the defense reporters (as most of the journalists in general) majored in some area of journalism or communications.

Table 5 suggests that the journalism field is predominantly male compared to the civilian labor force. Defense reporters are even more so, only 20 percent female.

Table 6 compares defense reporters and average journalists to members of the Pentagon press corps, canvassed by author Robert Sims in 1982. It seems defense reporters are comparable to journalists overall, and Pentagon reporters resemble elite press members, who have been in the news business for many years. The average defense reporters and

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<sup>73</sup> Weaver and Wilhoit, *American Journalist*.

<sup>74</sup> C.J. Storad, "Who Are the Science Journalists," pp. 39-48.

journalists are in their 30s, while the average Pentagon reporter is over 40. In fact, in 1982, over one-third of the Pentagon reporters were in their 50s, and only one was in his 20s, according to Sims.<sup>75</sup> Defense reporters and journalists average eight years journalism experience, but 41 percent of the Pentagon reporters have over 20 years experience. While the defense reporters and journalists are predominantly male, the Pentagon reporters are overwhelmingly so. According to Sims, the sole woman on the press corps left during his study in 1982. Today, one female reporter, the Associated Press bureau chief, is officed at the Pentagon, although about a dozen women, officed with their news organizations, periodically cover the Pentagon.

The generational differences in the Pentagon reporters at Table 6 and the other reporter groups likely impact the number of them who hold advanced degrees; only one quarter of the Pentagon reporters have graduate degrees, while 54 percent of the journalists and 80 percent of the defense reporters have them.

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<sup>75</sup> Sims, *Pentagon Reporters*.

Table 1. Characteristics of Surveyed Defense Reporters

VARIABLE	PERCENT (N)
SEX	
Male	80.5 (33)
Female	19.5 (8)
AGE	median=38 yrs mean=42.4 yrs
27-34	31.7 (13)
35-42	29.2 (12)
43-50	21.8 (9)
41-85	16.9 (7)
NEWSPAPER EXPERIENCE	median=8 yrs mean=13 yrs
1-7 yrs	48.9 (20)
8-19	26.7 (11)
20-60	24.1 (10)
BEAT EXPERIENCE	median=3 yrs mean=6.3 yrs mode=1 yr
EDUCATION	
some college	12.2 (5)
undergraduate degree	53.7 (22)
some graduate work	14.6 (6)
graduate degree	19.5 (8)
UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR	
journalism related	63.4 (26)
military related	17.1 (7)
other	19.5 (8)
MILITARY EXPERIENCE	
none	51.2 (21)
2-7 yrs	36.6 (15)
8-19	0.0
over 20	12.2 (5)
BEAT	
full-time defense	20.3 (16)
part-time defense	31.6 (25)
GA newspaper	48.1 (38)
SELF-PERCEPTION	
Generalist	63.4 (26)
Specialist	31.7 (13)

## BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF DEFENSE REPORTERS

**Table 2.** Age Distribution of American Daily Defense Reporters With U.S. Journalists and Civilian Labor Force

Age Group	Defense Reporters %	Journalists 1982-83 <sup>a</sup> %	U.S. Civilian Labor Force 1987 <sup>b</sup> %
25 - 34	31.7	44.9	29.4
35 - 44	36.5	21.0	23.7
45 - 54	14.5	10.9	15.2
55 - 64	9.7	8.9	9.9
65 or older	7.2	1.6	2.6
TOTAL	99.6 <sup>c</sup>	87.3 <sup>c</sup>	80.8 <sup>c</sup>
Median age	38	32.4	35-44

<sup>a</sup> From Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist*, p. 19.<sup>b</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, Statistical Abstract of the *United States*, 1989, 109th edition.<sup>c</sup> Does not total 100.0 percent for 2 reasons: rounding occurred, and younger age groups not applicable to the defense reporter sample were omitted from columns 3-4**Table 3.** Educational Distribution of American Daily Defense Reporters with U.S. Journalists

Level of Education	Defense Reporters (n=41)	Journalists 1982-3 <sup>a</sup> (n=988)
some college	12.2	19.7
undergraduate training	53.7	50.3
some graduate training	14.6	8.7
graduate degree	<u>19.5</u>	<u>11.1</u>
TOTAL	100.0	89.8 <sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> From Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist*, p. 47.<sup>b</sup> Does not total 100.0 percent because "journalist" percentages include high school cases that are not comparable to sample defense reporters.

**Table 4.** College Major Distribution of American Daily Defense Reporters with U.S. Journalists

<i>Undergraduate Majors</i>	<i>Defense Reporters</i>	<i>Journalists 1982-3<sup>a</sup></i>
Journalism/Communications Related <sup>b</sup>	63.4	69.4
Military Related <sup>c</sup>	17.1	11.2
Other	<u>19.5</u>	<u>19.4</u>
TOTAL	100.0	100.0

<sup>a</sup> From Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist*, p. 57.

<sup>b</sup> Major subjects include Journalism, Radio/Television/Film and English

<sup>c</sup> Major subjects include Social Sciences - Government, Political Science, Hard Sciences, etc.

**Table 5.** Sex Distribution of American Daily Defense Reporters with U.S. Journalists and Civilian labor Force

<i>Sex</i>	<i>Defense Reporters</i>	<i>Journalists 1982-83<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>U.S. Civilian Labor Force 1987<sup>b</sup></i>
Male	80.5	66.2	55.2
Female	19.5	33.8	44.7
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	99.9 <sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup> From Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist*, p. 19.

<sup>b</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, 1989, 109th edition.

<sup>c</sup> Does not total 100.0 because of rounding



**Table 6 "Typical" Defense Reporters, Journalists and Pentagon Reporters**

Trait	Defense Reporters	Journalists 1982 <sup>a</sup>	Pentagon Reporters 1982 <sup>b</sup>
Median Age	38	32	over 40
Percent Male	80.5	66.2	98
Years Journalism Experience	8	8	20
Years Military Experience	4	(not studied)	none or as draftee

<sup>a</sup> From Weaver and Wilhoit, *The American Journalist*, p. 70.

<sup>b</sup> From Robert Sims, *The Pentagon Reporters*.

The amount of military experience is comparable to defense and Pentagon reporters. Journalists on the average have no experience, but 36 percent of the Pentagon reporters have some experience as does the average defense reporter (with 4.1 years). According to Sims, the trend for reporters covering the Pentagon (as with journalists in general) is toward having no military experience at all.<sup>76</sup>

### **Specialized Knowledge**

The specialized knowledge of interviewed reporters was operationalized by determining their journalistic, beat, educational and military experience, as well as their objective knowledge about local

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

military installations. From the frequencies of specialized knowledge indicators (Table 7), it appears that almost half the defense reporters have less than 8 years journalism experience, and the majority have less than 8 years beat experience.

It is doubtful any specialized knowledge related to the defense beat, came from college, where most majored, not in military studies, but in journalism.

Slightly less than half the surveyed reporters had "on-the-job" training in the form of military service. Only 17 percent of the reporters had mid-career training, in the form of education seminars, briefings or academic fellowships.

Table 8 presents the correlation of the specialized knowledge "experience" indicators with each other. Only three significant correlations appear on the table -- journalistic experience with beat experience, journalistic experience with education level and education level with graduate major. In an effort to combine these indicators with indices, they were converted to a common scale and the correlation is shown at Tables 8a and 8b. This table excludes two indicators, graduate major and education level, which were apparently affected by generational differences among reporters. It seemed older reporters have less education (and are less likely to have a graduate degree). Because this relationship is not a concern related to specialized knowledge, the indicators were deleted.

**Table 7** Frequency Distribution of Specialized Knowledge Indicators  
(N=41)

*Experience Indicators*

Journalism Experience

Less Than 8 years	48.9
8 - 19 years	26.7
More than 20 years	24.1

Beat Experience

Less than 8 years	75.6
8 or more years	24.3

Education Level

Some College	12.2
College Degree	53.7
Some Graduate	14.6
Graduate Degree	19.5

Undergraduate Major

Journalism related	63.4
Military related	17.1
Other	19.5

Graduate Major

Journalism related	29.3
Military related	2.4
Other	4.9

Military Experience

None	51.2
2-7 years	36.6
20 or more	12.2

Mid-Career Training

Yes	17.1
No	82.9

**Table 7A. Frequency Distribution of Objective Knowledge Indicators**  
*Objective Knowledge Indicators*  
*(Results for Quiz on Local Installations)*

<u>Name of Installation</u>	
Correct	97.6
Incorrect	2.4
<u>Mission of Installation</u>	
Correct	95.1
Incorrect	4.9
<u>Number of Installation Personnel</u>	
Correct	51.2
Incorrect	48.8
<u>Commander's Name</u>	
Correct	61.0
Incorrect	39.0
<u>PAO's Name</u>	
Correct	72.5
Incorrect	27.5

**Table 8 Correlations of Specialized Knowledge Indicators**

	JOUREXP	BEATEXP	REPUNMAJ	REPGMAJ	MILEXP	MIDTNG	REPED
JOUREXP	1.0						
BEATEXP	.72**	1.0					
REPUNMAJ	.28	0.0	1.0				
REPGMAJ	.34	.18	.08	1.0			
MILEXP	.35	.21	.32	.07	1.0		
MIDTNG	-.12	-.20	-.17	.25	-.23	1.0	
REPED	-.49**	-.31	-.09	-.84**	-.01	-.14	1.0

\*p<.01

\*\*p<.001

JOUREXP = journalism experience  
 BEATEXP = beat experience  
 REPUNMAJ = reporter's undergraduate major  
 REPGMAJ = reporter's graduate major

MILEXP = military experience  
 MIDTNG = mid-career training  
 REPED = education level

**Table 8a** Correlations of Recoded Specialized Knowledge Indicators

	NJOUREXP	NBEATEXP	NREPUNMA	NMILEXP	MIDTNG
NJOUREXP	1.0				
NBEATEXP	.47* (p=.001)	1.0			
NREPUNMA	.05 (p=.37)	.25* (p=.06)	1.0		
NMILEXP	.37* (p=.009)	.13 (p=.21)	.21* (p=.10)	1.0	
MIDTNG	-.18 (p=.13)	-.25* (p=.06)	.21* (p=.10)	-.08 (p=.32)	1.0

\* designates significant correlation

NOTE: NJOUREXP: 0 = under 7 years, 1 = over 7 years  
 NBEATEXP: 0 = under 7 years, 1 = over 7 years  
 NREPUNMA: 1 = military related, 0 = other  
 NMILEXP: 0 = none, 1 = some  
 MIDTNG: 0 = none, 1 = some

**Table 8b** Correlations of Applied Specialized Knowledge Indicators  
(Objective Knowledge)

	MILNAME	PAONAME	MISSION	EMPLOYE	CMDR
MILNAME	1.0				
PAONAME <sup>a</sup>	-.10	1.0			
MISSION	-.04	.37*	1.0		
EMPLOYEE <sup>b</sup>	-.15	.42*	.23	1.0	
CMDR <sup>c</sup>	-.13	.68**	.28	.42*	1.0

\*  $p < .01$

\*\*  $p < .001$

a,b,c - Variables that were added to form an "Objective Knowledge Score."

MILNAME = name of closest/most prominent military installation

PAONAME = name of installation's public affairs officer

MISSION = primary mission of the installation

EMPLOYEE = number of civilian and military personnel

CMDR = name of the installation's primary commander

NOTE: In each case 1 = correct response, 0 = incorrect response

There are some relationships among the experience indicators; however, they are not consistent. While it was initially hoped that a single "specialized knowledge score" could be developed and compared to the other hypothetical variables (news quality, rapport quality and so on), the indicators did not show enough correlation to allow for development of a specialized knowledge score. Consequently, each indicator was compared to the other variable scores described later.

Specialized knowledge indicators were combined with an "objective knowledge" indicator, created from adding the results of the questions about local military installations. Questions about the PAO's

name, the installation commander's name and the number of personnel at the installation showed significant correlation (see Table 8b). These three indicators were added into "objective knowledge" scores, which, alongside the other specialized knowledge indicators, were compared to the other hypothetical variables.

**Hypothesis 1:**

**Specialized Knowledge > Perceived News Quality**

News quality (NQ) was operationalized by determining reporters' and PAOs' perceptions of local defense articles' accuracy, comprehensiveness, clarity, objectivity and interest. See Table 9 and Table 9a.

As one might expect, the reporters generally perceive their respective papers' defense coverage (including their own reportage) more positively than do the PAOs. Only one of the news quality indicators, "interest," is perceived similarly by both samples. The majority of reporters perceive their coverage to be accurate and understandable (clear), but only half of the PAOs agree. Whereas, a majority of reporters agree their coverage is comprehensive and objective, the majority of PAOs disagree.

As Tables 10 (reporters' NQ perceptions) and 11 (PAOs' NQ perceptions) show, there is a correlation pattern among the NQ indicators. This condition made it possible to combine the variables and produce a single score that represents news quality that is perceived by each sample group.

**Table 9** News Quality Perceptions by Defense Reporters and Public Affairs Officers About Their Counterparts

	Reporters' Agreement				PAOs' Agreement				
	SA	A	D	SD	SA	A	D	SD	NA
ACCURATE	34.1	53.7	12.2	0.0	1.4	49.3	41.1	8.2	
COMPREHENSIVE	31.7	39.0	29.3	0.0	4.1	35.6	50.7	9.6	
CLEAR/ UNDERSTANDABLE	34.1	58.5	7.3	0.0	1.4	52.1	42.5	4.1	
OBJECTIVE	43.9	43.9	12.2	0.0	0.0	35.6	52.1	9.6	2.7
INTERESTING	22.0	34.1	43.9	0.0	4.1	52.1	42.5	1.4	
SA=strongly agree, D=disagree, A=agree, SD=strongly disagree									

**Table 9a** Collapsed-Averaged Frequencies of News Quality Perceptions by Defense Reporters and Public Affairs Officers\*

	<i>Reporters' Perceptions of News Coverage</i>		<i>PAOs' Perceptions of News Coverage</i>	
	Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
ACCURATE	88	12	51	49
COMPREHENSIVE	71	29	40	60
CLEAR/ UNDERSTANDABLE	93	7	54	47
OBJECTIVE	88	12	36	62
INTERESTING	56	44	56	44
AVERAGE	79%	21%	47%	52%

\* Rounding Occurred



**Table 10 News Quality Correlations for Reporters**

	ACCURACY	COMP	CLARITY	OBJECTIV	INTEREST
ACCURACY	1.0				
COMP	.38*	1.0			
CLARITY	.30	.31	1.0		
OBJECTIV	.40*	.17	.22	1.0	
INTEREST	.34.	.69**	.34	.22	1.0

\* p&lt;.01

\*\*p&lt;.001

**Table 11 News Quality Correlations for PAO's**

	ACCURACY	COMP	CLARITY	OBJECTIV	INTEREST
ACCURACY	1.0				
COMP	.37*	1.0			
CLARITY	.45*	.71**	1.0		
OBJECTIV	.38*	.21	.29	1.0	
INTERESP	.18	.33	.29	.35	1.0

NOTE: High values correspond to agreement that defense news is accurate, comprehensive, etc.

The NQ variables for both reporters and PAOs were news accuracy, comprehensiveness, clarity, interest and objectivity. These variables were recoded so that positive responses received high values and negative received low values. Originally, the answers had been coded, "1" for strongly agree to "4" for strongly disagree. In recoding, the values were reversed. Then, the variables were added to produce NQ scores for each sample group.

Out of a possible NQ score of 20, the mean NQ score was 15.6 for reporters' perceptions and 12.2 for PAOs' perceptions. Some PAO NQ scores were as low as 6 and as high as 18.5. Reporter NQ scores ranged from 12 to 20.

When these scores were correlated with the specialized knowledge indicators, no significant relationships emerged; however, there is some negative correlation between the NQ perceptions of reporters and their military experience ( $r = -.20$ ).

**Table 12** Correlation of Perceived News Quality (reporters and PAOs) with Specialized Knowledge Indicators

<i>Specialized Knowledge Indicators</i>	<i>News Quality<sub>R</sub></i>	<i>News Quality<sub>P</sub></i>
Newspaper Experience	-.18	-.07
Beat Experience	-.02	-.08
Undergraduate Major	.07	-.15
Military Experience	-.20 ( $p=.105$ )	-.02
Mid-Career Training	-.07	.18
Objective Knowledge Score	-.14	.10

One might expect that the PAOs would rate newspaper coverage by dedicated defense reporters higher than coverage by general assignment reporters. To determine whether there was a pattern in the ratings of

PAOs, their NQ perception scores were divided according to the type of reporters covering local defense issues (GA, full-time or part-time). According to Table 13, there is little difference in the perception of news quality to the type of reporter doing the coverage. Each reporter category received an NQ score of 12.

**Hypothesis 2:**

**Specialized Knowledge > Perceived Rapport Quality**

In Table 14, demographic traits between defense reporters and PAOs are compared, to see if there are any glaring differences in the individuals, which may affect their professional relationship at the outset. The characteristics of the defense reporters and PAOs are surprisingly similar. Both groups are, on the average, nearly the same age, mostly male (although the PAO sample had slightly fewer males) and have nearly the same number of years job experience. While 65 percent of the reporters have college degrees, over half of the PAOs have graduate degrees. As expected, the majority of reporters (63 percent) majored in journalism or communications. It is somewhat unexpected, however, that over 50 percent of the PAOs have journalism-related degrees. One might expect the majority of PAOs to have military-related degrees, but the number who have studied journalism indicates common ground exists between the sampled groups.

**Table 13** PAO's Perceptions of News Quality According to Reporter Type

<i>Reporter Type</i>	<i>Mean NQ Perceived by PAOs</i>
GA Reporters	12.24 (median = 13)
Full-time Reporters	12.0 (median = 12)
Part-Time Reporters	12.4 (median = 13)

**Table 14** Comparison Between Reporters and PAOs (percentages)

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Reporters</u> (n = 41)	<u>PAOs</u> (n = 73)
Median Age	38	40
Sex		
Male	80.5%	75.3%
Female	19.5	24.7
Mean Job Experience (journalism for military/ military for PAOs)	12.98 yrs	14.32 yrs
Education Level		
High School	0.0	8.2
Undergraduate	65.9	37.0
Graduate	34.1	54.8
Undergraduate Major		
Journalism Related	63.4	50.7
Military Related	17.1	11.0
Other	19.5	31.5
Graduate Major*		
Journalism Related	29.3	24.7
Military Related	2.4	5.5
Other	4.9	24.7
No Graduate School	63.4	45.2



**Table 15a** Collapsed-Averaged Frequencies of Rapport Quality Perceptions by Defense Reporters and Public Affairs Officers\*

	Reporters Agreement <sup>a</sup>	PAO's Agreement
COOPERATIVE	93%	93%
RESPECT	83	89
TRUST	68	73
ADVERSARIALNESS	32	16

<sup>a</sup> percent who either agreed or strongly agreed

**Table 15b** Frequencies of Other Rapport Quality Indicators

	Reporters (n = 41)	PAOs (n = 72)
Contact Frequency		
weekly	68.3%	69.9%
less than weekly	31.7	28.8
Could Identify Counterpart	(n=40)	(n=45) <sup>a</sup>
Yes	72.5	80.0
No	27.5	20.0

<sup>a</sup> smaller variable shown because this variable not applicable for PAO's discussing GA newspapers

**Table 15c** Correlation of Perceived Rapport Quality with Collapsed Specialized Knowledge Indicators

Specialized Knowledge	Rapport QualityR	Rapport QualityP
Newspaper Experience	-.01	-.20 (p=.02)
Beat Experience	.01	-.26 (p=.06)
Undergraduate Major	.22 (p=.08)	-.16
Military Experience	.04	-.21 (p=.09)
Mid-Career Training	-.12	.10 (p=.27)
Objective Knowledge Score	-.40 (p=.006)	.15 (p=.18)

Table 15b lists other rapport indicators, frequency of contact initiated by each group, and ability of reporters and PAOs to identify their counterparts. The frequency of contact by both groups is nearly the same, with the majority of them making contact with their counterparts often -- once a week or more. A slightly higher percentage of the PAOs can identify reporters than reporters can name PAOs.

Tables 16 (reporters' RQ perceptions) and 17 (PAOs' RQ perceptions) suggest there is a correlation pattern among the RQ indicators. Consequently, like the analysis of news quality, these

indicators were added into indices representing rapport quality for reporters and PAOs.

The procedure to develop RQ scores was similar to the development of the news quality scores described earlier. The values of each response were recoded so that positive responses received high values and negative received low values. Since the "adversarial" indicator of RQ was originally coded "1" for strongly agree to "4" for strongly disagree (lower value for negative response), this indicator was not recoded.

Out of a possible RQ score of 20, the mean RQ score was 12.4 for reporters and 12.8 for PAOs. Both groups have a slightly more positive than negative picture of their rapport with each other.

**Table 16** Rapport Quality Correlations For Reporters

	PAONAME	COOP	ADVERS	RESPAO	TRUSTPAO	CONTACT
PAONAME	1.0					
COOP	-.05	1.0				
ADVERS	.17	-.63**	1.0			
RESPAO	-.25	.73**	-.55**	1.0		
TRUSTPAO	-.18	.62**	-.5788	.77**	1.0	
CONTACT	.67**	.03	-.03	.02	-.13	1.0

\*p<.01

\*\*p<.001

NOTE: PAONAME = ability to ID counterpart  
 COOP = cooperativeness of relationship  
 ADVERS = adversarialness of relationship  
 RESPAO = respect for PAO  
 TRUSTPAO = trust for PAO  
 CONTACT = frequency of contact



**Table 17** Rapport Quality Correlations For PAO's

	REPID	REPCOOP	RADVERS	RESREP	TRUSTREP	CONFREQ
REPID	1.0					
REPCOOP	.29	1.0				
RADVERS	-.13	-.52**	1.0			
RESREP	.34	.61**	-.20	1.0		
TRUSTREP	.16	.61**	-.60**	.55**		1.0
CONFREQ	.48*	.39*	-.13	.34	.06	1.0

\*p&lt;.01

\*\*p&lt;.001

NOTE: REPID = ability to ID counterpart  
 REPCOOP = cooperativeness of relationship  
 RADVERS = adversarialness of relationship  
 RESREP = respect for reporter  
 TRUSTREP = trust for reporter  
 CONFREQ = frequency of contact

Next, the RQ scores were compared to the specialized knowledge indicators, and some significant correlations emerged (see Table 18). For reporters' perceptions, a positive correlation exists between positive rapport and the reporter's undergraduate major. This suggests that the better the reporter's rapport, the more likely he studied a military-related field in college. A negative correlation exists between rapport and the objective knowledge score. This suggests the better the reporter's rapport with the local PAO, the worse his actual knowledge of the PAO's installation.

For PAOs' perceptions, each correlation (three of them) is negative. PAO rapport quality correlates negatively with the reporter's newspaper

experience, beat experience and military experience. Possibly this suggests the more the reporter's experience, the more negatively the rapport with him is perceived by the PAO.

**Table 18** Correlation of Perceived Rapport Quality (reporter and PAOs) with Specialized Knowledge Indicators

Specialized Knowledge Indicators	Rapport QualityR	Rapport QualityP
Newspaper Experience	-.01	-.20 (p=.02)
Beat Experience	.01	-.26 (p=.06)
Undergraduate Major	.22 (p=.08)	-.16
Military Experience	.04	-.21 (p=.09)
Mid-Career Training	-.12	.10
Objective Knowledge Score	-.40 (p=.006)	.15

**Hypothesis 3:**

**Beat Complexity > Perceived Need for Specialized Knowledge**

The evidence provided for Hypothesis 2 suggests the reporters and PAOs contact each other frequently and have little trouble dealing with each other professionally. Although defense reporters may not attribute

reporting problems to their relationships with PAOs, the complexity of defense may provide roadblocks to coverage. According to sources referred to in the literature review section, reporters are reluctant to take on complex stories, and defense is a difficult subject to cover.

To ascertain the defense reporters' views on the complexity of defense and the need for specialized knowledge about defense, surveyed reporters were asked to rank the defense beat among other, arbitrarily selected, contemporary beats -- science, the environment, education and politics.

Table 19 shows that 70 percent of the reporters consider the defense beat either the most difficult or the second most difficult of the five beats to cover. However, it appears from Table 20 that a slight majority of reporters believe the science beat requires the most specialized knowledge. From these tables, one might surmise that reporters do consider the defense beat to be complex, but they do not believe it requires much specialized knowledge.

Since this point does not come through strongly, it is beneficial to also consider the response frequencies for two related statements on the reporter questionnaire: The statement, "Many obstacles inherent in covering local defense issues often stand in the way of getting a good story," was agreed to by 68 percent of the reporters. The statement, "More specialized knowledge about defense would help you write about your beat more effectively," was also agreed to by 93 percent of the reporters.

**Table 19.** First and Second Place Rankings of Five Beats: Defense, Environment, Education, Politics and Science (by percentage)

<i>Complexity of Beat</i>			
Most Complex Beats		2nd Most Complex Beats	
Defense*	39.0 (%)	Defense*	39.0 (%)
Science	34.1	Science	22.0
Environment	14.6	Environment	22.0
Politics	12.2	Education	9.8
Education	0.0	Politics	7.3

\* 70% defense reporters considered their beat most or second most difficult of 5 beats.

**Table 20** *Required Specialized Knowledge of Beat*

Beat Requiring Most SK		Beat Requiring 2nd Most SK	
Science	51.2 (%)	Defense	43.9 (%)
Environment	24.4	Science	24.4
Defense	22.0	Environment	22.0
Politics	2.4	Politics	7.3
Education	0.0	Education	2.4

These responses seem to suggest that, as Table 19 reveals, reporters consider the defense beat to be complex. The responses to the second statement may oppose the Table 20 findings by pointing to a strong majority of reporters who believe specialized knowledge would help them perform better. Of course, it is possible the same reporters would have said specialized knowledge about science would enhance the science reporter's performance. Further research would provide helpful information about beat complexity.

Reporters' list of obstacles in reporting about local defense issues (Table 21) provides further support to the contention that the defense beat is difficult to report about. Reporters most often cited "sourcing," gaining access to the proper source, as an obstacle to reporting. The second most cited obstacle was the reticence by militarily-connected individuals to cooperate with defense reporters.

The fact that specialized knowledge is needed to report effectively about complex issues is also supported, though not as strongly, under the "Newspaper Obstacles" heading (specifically, numbers 1 and 5-8). Reporters say directly that their own lack of "background," "training" and "knowledge" hampers their ability to cover the defense beat.

**Hypothesis 4:**

**Specialized Knowledge > News Gathering Routine  
Diversity**

The initial presumption for H4 was that increased specialized knowledge would result in increased number of routines employed by the defense reporter. In other words, if a reporter knew more about his

subject, he would also know of a greater variety of sources to choose from for information. Defense reporters were asked how often (frequently, sometimes, rarely or never) they utilized the following routines for research: interview, press release, press conference, other reporters, military officials, other news stories and trade journals. They were also asked how much time, by percentage, they spent doing document research. The response distribution appears at Table 22. The most frequently used news gathering technique is the "interview," with "inquiry of military officials" following second. From the combined percentages (Table 22a), it appears that, of all the routines, "document" research was employed the least, with "use of other news reporters" second least.

A correlation of each routines variable was run against the specialized knowledge variables. If a relationship between specialized knowledge and news gathering routines existed, I would have expected to see many positive correlations. The results, printed at Table 24, show some significant relationships. The defense reporter's journalism experience is tied to the use of the press release, the press conference and (negatively to) inquiry of military officials. Beat experience is tied to press release usage, and undergraduate major (military = 1, other = 2) is negatively tied to the press conference. The reporter's military experience is negatively tied to inquiry of military officials and trade journal use. There were no other significant relationships among specialized knowledge indicators and reporter routines.

**Table 21a** Obstacles to Defense Reporting Listing by Defense Reporters

<i>Related to the Military</i>			
Obstacle	# Responses	Obstacle	# Responses
1. Reticence;Lack of Cooperation Among Individuals	16. 11	Bureaucratic Structuring	2
		17. Need for Civilian PAO	*
3. Secrecy; Secret Mentality; Protectionism	9	18. Inept PAOs	
4. Classification hampers access	6	19. Lack of Contractor Cooperation	
5. Knowing Proper source	6	20. Line Officer Don't Understand Media	
6. Slowness of Bureaucracy	6	21. Information Hard to Obtain	
7. Requirement to Go Through PA	5	22. Difficult to Verify Rumors	
8. Security	4	23. Access to Documents	
9. Jargon;Terminology	4	25. Geographic Distance to Stories	
10. Access to Base	4	26. Ability to Observe Hardwar	
11. Technology Complexity	3	27. Combative Attitude to Press	
12. Insular Nature	2	28. Vietnam Legacy of Fear of Press	
13. Tie to Wash. D.C.	2	29. Requirement for Base Escort	
14. Difficulty in locating PAO	2	30. No Information Alternative(e.g.police blotter)	
15, Propagandist PAOs	2	31. Military Politics	

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**Table 21b**

<i>Related to the Newspaper</i>			
Obstacle	# Responses	Obstacle	# Responses
1. Reporter Lacks Background Knowledge	3	7. Reporters Don't Know System	
2. Time Constraints	3	8. Reporters Lack Technical Knowledge	
3. Part-Time Nature of Beat	2	9. Reporters Lack Military Background	
4. Conflicts With Editorial Staff	2	10. Reporters Have Trouble with Volume	
5. Lack of Reporting Training		11. Disinterest of Management	
6. Reporter Burnout Since Vietnam		12. Difficulty in Finding Relevance	

\*No number shown indicates one response for particular obstacle.

**Table 22** Employment of News Gathering Routines by Defense Reporters (n=41)

<i>Sources</i>	<i>Frequency of Use</i>			
	<i>Frequently</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Rarely</i>	<i>Never</i>
Interview	95.1	2.4	2.4	0.0
Press Release	31.7	43.9	22.0	2.4
Press Conference	17.1	29.3	43.9	9.8
Other Reporters	4.9	26.8	61.0	7.
Inquiry of Military Officials	85.4	14.6	0.0	0.0
Other News Stories	26.8	58.5	14.6	0.0
Trade Journals	26.8	48.8	17.1	7.3
Document*	2.4 (81-100%)	0.0 (61-80%)	31.7 (21-60%)	65.9 (0-20%)



**Table 22a** Collapsed Frequencies of News Gathering Routines

Sources	Percentage Used at Least Sometimes
Interview	97.5
Press Release	75.6
Press Conference	46.4
Other Reporters	31.7
Inquiry of Military Officials	100.0
Other News Stories	85.3
Trade Journals	75.6
Document	2.4

**Table 23** Pearson Correlation of Reporter Routines by Specialized Knowledge

	Press Release	Press Conference	Other Reporters	Inquiry of Mil Ofcls	Other News Stor	Trade Journal	Document
Journalism Experience	.24 (p=.06)	.22 (p=.08)	-.06 (p=.33)	-.22 (p=.08)	.15 (p=.18)	-.10 (p=.27)	-.02 (p=.46)
Beat Experience	.33 (p=.018)	.09 (p=.29)	.04 (p=.40)	-.19 (p=.12)	.07 (p=.33)	-.02 (p=.46)	-.02 (p=.45)
Undergraduate Major	-.04 (p=.39)	-.29 (p=.03)	.11 (p=.11)	.10 (p=.26)	.00 (p=.49)	.11 (p=.25)	-.05 (p=.37)
Military Experience	-.16 (p=.16)	.08 (p=.31)	.06 (p=.36)	-.33 (p=.019)	.07 (p=.33)	-.33* (p=.019)	.11 (p=.25)
Mid-Career Training	-.11 (p=.25)	-.10 (p=.27)	.17 (p=.14)	.20 (p=.11)	-.00 (p=.49)	.04 (p=.39)	-.08 (p=.30)
Obknow	.04 (p=.41)	.01 (p=.47)	.12 (p=.23)	.17 (p=.14)	.14 (p=.20)	-.16 (p=.16)	.03 (p=.42)

## **Chapter 6**

### **Discussion**

One primary question of this report asks, "Who is the defense reporter?" Who is the writer behind the story that claims Smith Army Post is covering up mistakes, or a Jones Air Force Base airplane crashed due to pilot error? Do these reporters know the difference between a warhead and a beachhead? Can they distinguish between a Navy and Army Captain? Can they empathize with the pilot dogfighting in an F-16?

While statistical analysis has provided a snapshot of the "typical" defense reporter, I conclude that the picture of the "typical" is fuzzy in focus. The surveyed reporters are in their twenties, as well as over 70. Some fought in military battles; others have barely graduated from college. Some have been on the beat 16 years; others began eight months ago. Some enjoy the work; others simply tolerate it. Some expend energy to seek out and understand local military issues to report about; others rely on press releases from public affairs offices to fill weekly columns.

The allocation of defense writers on newspaper staffs is just as varied. Some newspapers employ them full time, and others expect their GAs to juggle defense stories with business, the environment or the federal prison. Part-time defense reporting is sometimes covered by a

regional bureau reporter or a writer covering a specific newspaper section. Bill Bayne reporter with the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, is a regional beat reporter. He says, "I cover defense with a 'little d'."

There is no standard structuring of newspaper beat reporters by American newspaper management. One might conjecture that defense reporters work where the military impact is greatest. For example, of course the San Diego *Union and Tribune* employ full-time defense reporters. DOD's San Diego expenditure for salaries and contract allotments per year is over 4 billion dollars. However, if it is true that defense reporters work where there is military presence, how can one explain the situation in Florida? There, the *Tampa Tribune* (located in Tampa, where DOD pays \$383.7 million per year) employs a full-time defense reporter. On the other hand, the *Orlando Sentinel* (located in Orlando, where DOD pays \$2.1 billion per year) employs no defense reporter, full or part-time. Covering such military installations as the Orlando Naval Training Center (with over 16,800 personnel) is left to GA reporters.

In San Antonio, Texas, there are some 75,000 Air Force members, five military installations and a large retired military population. One of its papers has a full-time defense reporter; the other has none. The personnel structure of American dailies varies. Some hire reporters for local defense beats, while others trust their Washington bureau reporters to cover the important aspects of defense.

Because of the disparity among hiring practices in American newspaper organizations, many of those reporters interviewed indicated curiosity about their own specialty. Some discussed hopes to begin a defense writers' association, a means of exchanging information and guidance with reporters like themselves.

While very little has been written about the local defense reporter, the Washington defense reporters -- the Washington press in general -- have received much attention. It is tempting to consider Pentagon reporters a collection of specialized defense beat reporters. However, this Washington breed would perhaps be more appropriately compared to other Washington reporters. Reporters at the Pentagon, the "heart of the beast," so to speak, likely have different interests than those covering local defense issues. While the Washington bureau reporter is concerned with national defense policy, for example, the local beat reporter in Valdosta, Georgia or Syracuse, New York is concentrating on the military impact on his community. One of the surveyed reporters said that it is easier to get information from Washington, ironically, than from local installations. "We have to be more enterprising as local beat reporters," said another.

Who are these defense reporters?

One aspect of defining local defense reporters is determining their specialized knowledge, a characteristic some of the interviewed PAOs contend local defense reporters lack. One interviewed PAO for North Island Naval Air Station said, "We get questions that are stunning. Some

of the reporters don't even know what an aircraft carrier is, and they're writing about it.

Another PAO, who is attached to Norfolk Naval Station, said about local defense coverage, "It's not adversarial, just not accurate." She went on to relate how her staff had sent the local press a media release about a recent F-14 airplane crash. "The story in the paper had nine factual errors that could have been corrected by checking the release," she said.

Table 7, portrays that defense beat reporters, as a whole, are not overwhelmingly rich in their background knowledge of defense. The defense reporter for the *Arizona Republic*, said, "A big advantage to covering this beat would be to have been in the military." Yet, most of the surveyed reporters had no military service.

Jeff Gauger, with the *Omaha World Herald* was tutored in his new position on the defense beat by a former editor of *Aviation Week* magazine. Not all of the reporters get that kind of help. In fact, most of them have never had any mid-career education sponsored by their newspapers' management, "and it's really too bad," said Nancy Price, defense reporter for the *Florida Times Union*. As journalists continue majoring primarily in communications fields, and as fewer volunteer for military service, specialized knowledge for the defense reporter may decline further.

Would the absence of specialized knowledge be a concern for reporters who wish to perform well on the job? The results of H1 indicate

that specialized knowledge does not affect perceptions of news quality by those on both sides of the news process.

### **Hypothesis 1**

The results indicate that H1 is not supported. One weak correlation did surface, relating reporters' high news quality rating to their minimal military experience. This logically suggests that the more military experience the defense reporter has, the more critical he is of his defense coverage.

While this correlation is interesting, other factors surrounding the defense beat reporter may influence news quality more than specialized knowledge. It is possible that organizational influences impact the newspaper's defense coverage more than the individual reporter. For example, a newspaper's personnel structure, management's newspaper philosophies or management's rapport with people in the community may affect the perception of news quality by both sample groups.

A possibility exists that PAOs give local defense news a lower rating than reporters because of preconceived notions about the press, rather than their personal opinions about defense reporters.

### **Hypothesis 2**

Is the lack of specialized knowledge a concern when dealing with sources? Overall, H2 was not supported completely either, although it

was in part. Analysis suggests that reporters' perceptions of rapport are inclined to be positive if they studied military-related subjects in college.

H2 was negatively supported by evidence that shows reporters' perceptions of their rapport are lower the more they learn about local installations (correlation between reporter rapport perceptions and the objective knowledge scores). Results concerning PAO perception of rapport quality also reveal negative correlations. They indicate that the more experience (in the newspaper, beat and military) the reporter has, the worse the PAO considers the relationship's rapport.

Analysis for H2 revealed unexpected results. Both groups, with somewhat similar characteristics, positively perceive their relationships with each other. The majority of them contact each other frequently, and they respect, trust and can identify their counterparts.

More PAOs are able to identify their counterparts possibly because their jobs require they know press members. Fewer reporters can name PAOs because they likely seek out sources, not public relations practitioners. Also, they may have a more difficult time keeping current *names of militarily connected contacts who regularly rotate among installations.*

The majority of both groups also considered their relationships with their counterparts to be cooperative and non-adversarial. Table 15a shows a higher majority responded positively about relationship cooperation than about adversarialness. The dissimilar response can be attributed to the fact that some respondents contend some adversarialness

is good. This insinuates cooperativeness and adversarialness are not direct opposites.

The positive individual rapport between reporters and sources, although not universal among the respondents, was unexpected. As the literature noted, there has historically been tension between the press and national defense. It is helpful to note, however, that the primary focus of past research about the defense-press relationship occurred at the macro or systemic level, rather than the interpersonal level that I have dealt with here.

### **Hypothesis 3**

There is some indication that H3 is supported, but one can be sure only after further research. It was initially presumed that reporters would rank the defense beat (compared to other standard beats) high in complexity and high in requirement of specialized knowledge. While the beat was, in fact, ranked high in complexity, most of the respondents did not rank the need for specialized knowledge as high.

The list of obstacles to which reporters contributed represents further evidence related to the difficulty of the defense beat. Although a strong majority of the reporters agreed specialized knowledge would help them write more effectively, the support connecting the beat's complexity with the need for specialized knowledge could be more persuasive.

Reporters named reporting roadblocks that were also alluded to in the literature, and they highlighted other obstacles, as well.



For example, reporters listed five obstacles involving the PAO. Five of the reporters resented the requirement to go through the PAO to get to the source of a story. Although some of the surveyed reporters had mentioned PAOs were helpful information sources, others claimed they were inept, hard to locate and eager to push the "party-line."

Other problems involved internal organizational problems for reporters. An illustration of time constraint problems was offered by one PAO. She said she made herself available to brief editors on her installation's mission, but the editors declined due to "lack of time."

Both sides of the news gathering process (press and military management) could benefit by becoming aware of these obstacles. Understanding them is the first step toward developing solutions.

#### **Hypothesis 4**

If H4 was strongly supported, I would have expected to see numerous positive correlations among the specialized knowledge indicators and reporter routines. However, the correlations which emerged were few in number. Those that did appear suggest the following:

1. *The more journalism experience the reporter has, the more likely he uses press releases and press conferences, but the less likely he makes inquiry of military officials.*
2. *The more beat experience the reporter has, the more likely he will use the press release for research.*

3. The reporter with a military-related college major will less likely use the press conference.

4. The reporter with military experience will less likely make inquiry of military officials or refer to trade journals.

It is difficult, without further research, to understand these particular correlations. The most apparently logical of the resultant relationships is number 4. One might expect that a reporter with military experience would feel so confident in his military knowledge that he felt no need to use military sources. One of the PAOs surveyed would have chuckled at this assertion. The local defense reporter in his community had four years military experience, yet frequently wrote inaccurate statements because of his faith in himself rather than in current military sources.

The analysis of reporter routines does confirm the findings of Hess and Nimmo that the interview is the most commonly used research technique. It also confirms Hess' findings that reporters avoid document research. In fact, in this survey, document research was the least used of the reporter news gathering routines. Hess had said reporters avoided documentation because of lack of training. Taking this fact into account, along with reporters mentioning lack of training under beat obstacles, adds to the contention that reporters need specialized knowledge.

According to their own comments and to questionnaire indicators, local defense beat reporters lack extensive specialized knowledge. In this age when so many people rely on mass media in making personal

decisions, the idea of a reporter writing about something on which he has little background might be a bit fearsome. But is there cause for fear?

As this report shows, there is no real correlation between reporters' specialized knowledge and their perceived news quality. According to analysis of source-reporter relationships, reporters perceive that their rapport quality with their sources actually declines the more they know about their local subjects. PAOs perceive their rapport quality declines the more background and experience their reporters have. Also, there is ostensibly no relation between the reporters' specialized knowledge and the diversity of their news gathering routines.

Why believe in the need for reporters' specialized knowledge if quantitative research shows little relation between it and news quality, rapport quality and news gathering routine diversity?

The answer may be found in the results of H3, which was supported in a qualitative sense. Reporters directly indicated that they needed and desired specialized knowledge. Given this admission, plus such comments by PAOs that local coverage is inaccurate, and comments by reporters that management ignores mid-career training, what are the solutions to problems that have been illuminated?

For the defense reporters concerned, the following solutions are proposed remedies:

1. Since time constraints were considered obstacles to reporting, newspaper management would do well to allow reporters more time and fewer deadlines until they become well-versed in their specialties.

2. Newspaper management must also consider the time factor when allowing for reporter training. By allowing an afternoon here or there for training seminars or tutorials from experts, management may notice improved reporter performance and, moreover, positive readership response. Financial support would further motivate some reporters to obtain academic training to better understand their assigned specialties.

3. It is important for American dailies to work toward some kind of standard of personnel management. If this country is, in fact, a "global village," that means it is easier for masses to compare geographically separated newspapers. More standards could help even the competition and lend a professional image to competitive newspapers.

4. An association of defense writers might prove one way to develop standards among defense reporters. Existing associations, such as a science writers' and education writers' association, have proven helpful for some. Members could share problems, references and enterprising ideas in order to universally improve their reportage.

For public affairs officers concerned, the following solutions are proposed:

1. According to defense reporter Jack Dorsey, a series of press-military seminars resulted from the exclusion of the press during the U.S. invasion of Grenada in 1983 and ensuing press hostility.<sup>77</sup> According to Dorsey, there followed a renewed emphasis on improving relations

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<sup>77</sup> Jack Dorsey, "Assessing Hometown Coverage of the Military," *Presstime* (Sept. 1987), p. 30

among military sources and reporters. Such activities as editorial meetings and informal gatherings might improve tense press-military relationships today, as well.

2. Since there is no continuous training program in existence for the defense beat reporter, PAOs and upper-level military managers should sponsor sessions that are perhaps nationally recognized in the manner that some universities are accredited.

3. Kathy Bachman, defense reporter with the Syracuse Herald-Journal, discussed the problems of deciphering military jargon. "There are books on law or science terminology, but not on defense terms," she said. PAOs often stock an abundance of "fact sheets" on weapon systems, military organizations and so on. In fact, DOD probably churns out enough information to fill newspaper office shelves many times over. A readable, concise multi-service guide on military terms, however, could prove helpful for the defense reporter. Perhaps a media-connected organization, such as the Associated Press, could endorse such a guide, as it did newspaper style in the form of the "AP Stylebook."

4. Since there is evidence that reporters have an affinity for oral research apart from documentation, military management, accepting this condition, could work toward accommodating requests for interviews by reporters. Of course, in turn, reporters should follow bureaucratic processes (going through the PAOs, for example) to achieve their interview goals.

Without participation by management, defense reporters may not have the impetus to "get smart" on their specialty. Without accommodating efforts by military public affairs managers, the military side may be absent from defense reportage.

### **Conclusion**

This report has focused on the need for specialized knowledge in an age of mass media specialization. While three of the primary hypotheses were not strongly supported, subordinate findings do merit recognition and further research. The American defense beat reporters, hardly studied as a group before, comprise a diverse, loosely connected body that seems to be longing for identity. Many of those reporters interviewed indicated a desire to belong to some kind of writer's association. Some were curious to know how defense was covered at newspapers in other communities. Certainly, further study could bring forth ideas to enhance their work in this specialty area.

Unexpected findings resulted from searching for a relationship between reporters' specialized knowledge and reporter-PAO rapport. While the defense-press relationship has been perceived negatively in much of the literature, the micro-level focus of this study (reporter-PAO rapport) suggests positive rapport exists in the majority of large American cities. If specialized knowledge makes any impact at all, statistical results suggest it is merely to increase skepticism of both sides.

It is acknowledged that the scientific methods and indicators used in the quantitative portion of this study may have ignored gray shades.

Perhaps the indicators selected to tap knowledge, news quality and other variables were incomplete. Also, it is important to note that a survey of one particular specialty, defense, cannot be directly applied to other specialties. However, since little research has been accomplished on the specialty reporter within any of the mass media (including large American newspapers), revelations here do provide better understanding of phenomena which may accompany the specialization trend of this modern global village.

## Appendix 1

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DEFENSE REPORTERS

*BRACKETS BY EACH NUMBER INDICATE THE VARIABLE TO WHICH THE QUESTION IS ATTACHED. THEY ARE DEFINED AS FOLLOWS:*

- SK - Specialized Knowledge (primary independent variable)
- H1 through H4 - numbered hypotheses dependent variables (independent in the case of H3)
- info - for general information about media specialization
- P - for respondent demographic profiles

My name is Judy Scott. I am at the University of Texas in Austin and am conducting a survey on military reporters working for large daily newspapers. Could you give me 15 minutes to answer some questions? I assure you your name will be kept in confidence. I simply need information about you as a defense reporter, your background related to journalism and the difficulties or benefits of your beat.

1. <info> What is the specific beat you cover?

- 1 - solely defense/military
- 2 - part-time defense

Now I'm going to make some statements in which your choices of responses will be: strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.

- |                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| *1 - strongly agree | 3 - disagree          |
| 2 - agree           | 4 - strongly disagree |

Here's the first statement:

2. <H3> Issues concerning local military installations/s are complex and therefore difficult to report about. \*

3. <H3> Many obstacles inherent in the defense subject often stand in the way of getting a good story.\*

4. <SK> More specialized knowledge about defense would help me write about my beat more effectively.\*

5. <H3> I'm going to list 5 different beats: They are environment, education, defense, science and politics. Which of them do you think is the most complex (difficult to report about)? Which is second most? Third most? Fourth? and Fifth?



6. <H3> Which of those 5 beats do you think requires the most specialized knowledge? What about the second which most requires specialized knowledge? The third? Fourth? The one which requires the least specialized knowledge?

7. <H3> What are three obstacles or roadblocks that come to your mind in reporting about defense? (answers on separate listing)

8. <H4> I'm going to name 4 reporting research techniques. Please tell me how often you use each technique by answering frequently, sometimes, rarely or never.

\*1 - frequently  
2 - sometimes

3. rarely  
4. never

- a) How often do you use the interview technique?\*
- b) How often do you refer to press releases for research?
- c) How often do you make inquiry of public officials?
- d) How often do you attend press conferences related to your beat?

9. <H4> Now I'm going to name 4 sources you may go to for information in order to report about your subject. Please answer using the same categories the question I just asked.

- a) How often do you use information from other reporters?
- b) How often do you used information from local military officials?
- c) How Often do you use inforamtion from other news stories?
- c) How often do you use information from specialty or trade

journals?

10. <H4> What percentage of your time is spent on document research?

- 1 - 0 to 20
- 2 - 21-60
- 3 - 61-80
- 4 - 81-100

11. <info> Do you consider yourself a generalist or specialist?

- 1 - generalist
- 2 - specialist
- 3 - both

Next, I'm going to ask you your opinion of your newspaper's local defense coverage including your inputs. Please answer with strongly agree, agree, 'isagree or strongly disagree.

12. <H1> Your newspaper's local defense coverage (including your inputs) provides completely accurate coverage of defense issues in your community.\*

13. <H1> Your newspaper's local defense coverage (with your inputs) reports issues as comprehensively as possible.\*

14. <H1> Your newspaper's local defense coverage (with your inputs) reports issues in a clearly understandable fashion.\*

15. <H1> Your newspaper's local defense coverage (including your inputs) always provides both sides of the issues.\*

16. <H1> Your and your newspaper's local defense coverage is as interesting as it can be made.\*

17. <H2> Your professional relationship with the local public affairs officer would improve if you knew more about their activities at (X) installation.\*

18. <H2> Do you happen to know the name of the local public affairs officer at the local military installation?

1 - correct

2 - incorrect

The following are again strongly agree to strongly disagree questions.\*

19. <H2> Your professional relationship with (X) installation's PAO is cooperative.\*

20. <H2> Your professional relationship with (X) installation's PAO is adversarial.\*

21. <H2> You respect X PAO.\*

22. <H2> You trust X PAO.\*

23. <H2> How often do you contact X PAO or his/her office?

1 - weekly or more

2 - less than weekly; more than monthly

3 - less than monthly; more than every 3 months

4 - less often

In the following questions, I am trying to get a feel for the military impact in your community. (1 = correct; 2 = incorrect)\*

24. <SK-Quiz> What is the closest military installation to your newspaper office?\*

25. <SK-Quiz> What do they do out there (mission)?\*

26. <SK-Quiz> Do you happen to know about how many people are employed out there?\*

27. <SK-Quiz> Do you know the commander's name out there?\*

28. <SK-Quiz> What would you guess the military (DOD) spends in any given year on paying people and awarding contracts in your city?\*

Now, I'd like to ask questions about you so that I can develop a profile of defense reporters around the country. Your identification will be kept confidential.

29. <SK> How long have you been in the newspaper business?

30. <SK> How long have you been on this particular beat?

31. <P> What year were you born?

32. <SK> What was the last grade of school you completed?

- 1 - high school
- 2 - some undergraduate work
- 3 - bachelor's degree
- 4 - some graduate work
- 5 - graduate degree

33. <SK> What was your major undergraduate field of study (if applicable)?

- 1 - journalism related
- 2 - military related
- 3 - other

34. <SK> What was your major graduate field of study (if applicable)?

- 1 - journalism related
- 2 - military related
- 3 - other

35. Have you served in the U.S. military? How long?

36. Have you had any mid-career training to help you with military reporting?

1 - yes

2 - no

These are all the questions that I have. Thank you very much for your time and cooperation.

Record after interview.

37. <P> What is respondent's sex?

1 - male

2 - female

## Appendix 2

### QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PAOS

My name is Judy Scott. I am at the University of Texas in Austin and am conducting a survey on military reporters and their PAO counterparts. Your name will be kept confidential in my study. Do you have 10 minutes to answer some questions?

1. <to verify reporter answer> Who is the XX commander?
2. <to verify reporter answer> Briefly what is your mission?
3. <H2> What is the name of the local daily newspaper?  
1 - correct  
2 - incorrect
4. <H2> What is the name of the local military reporter there?  
1 - correct  
2 - incorrect
5. <H2> How often do you or members of your staff contact the local military reporter (or newspaper in the case of GA reporters)?  
1 - weekly or more  
2 - less than weekly; more than monthly  
3 - less than monthly; more than 3 months  
4 - less often

Now I'm going to make some statements, and please respond with strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree.

- |                     |                       |
|---------------------|-----------------------|
| *1 - strongly agree | 3 - disagree          |
| 2 - agree           | 4 - strongly disagree |
6. <SK> The local defense reporter is knowledgeable about your installation.\*
  7. <H2> Your professional relationship with the local defense reporter is cooperative.\*
  8. <H2> Your professional relationship with the local defense reporter is adversarial.\*
  9. <H2> You respect the local defense reporter.\*

10. <H2> You trust the local defense reporter.\*

The following statements have to do with your opinion of the local daily paper's local defense coverage. Again, please respond with strongly agree to strongly disagree.

11. <H1> The local newspaper (and its defense reporter) provide completely accurate coverage of local defense issues.\*

12. <H1> The local newspaper (and its defense reporter) provide completely comprehensive coverage of local defense issues.\*

13. <H1> The local newspaper (and its defense reporter) provide completely clear and understandable coverage of local defense issues.\*

14. <H1> The local paper (and its reporter) always prints both sides of local defense issues.\*

15. <H1> The local defense coverage is as interesting as it can be made.\*

16. <H1> On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being best, how would you rate X paper's coverage of defense locally?

17. <H2> On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being best, how would you rate your professional rapport with Reporter X?

Now I would like to ask you questions about you so that I can develop a profile of PAOs in the various services.

18. <P> Are you military or civilian?

1 - military

2 - civilian

19. <P> How long have you been in the military?

20. <P> What was the last grade of school you completed?

1 - high school

2 - some undergraduate

3 - bachelors degree

4 - graduate work

5 - graduate degree

21. <P> What was your major field of undergraduate study?

- 1 - journalism related
- 2 - military related
- 3 - other

22. <P> What was your major graduate field of study?

- 1 - journalism related
- 2 - military related
- 3 - other

23. <P> What year were you born?

These are all of my questions. Thank you for your time.

24. <P> Respondent's sex.

- 1 - male
- 2 - female

### Appendix 3

#### METROPOLITAN DAILIES WITH LOCAL MILITARY INSTALLATIONS

STATE/CITY	NEWSPAPER	INSTALLATION	PERSONNEL	ACREAGE
<b>Alabama</b>				
1 Birmingham	News (169,059e)	Alabama ANG Tac Recon	351	86
<b>Alaska</b>				
	n/a			
<b>Arizona</b>				
Phoenix	-Republic (343,723m)	-Luke AFB Air Division	7295	5396
	-Gazette (105,033e)	-Williams AFB	3857	4762
Tucson	-Daily Star (80,766m)	-Davis Monthan AFB Air Division	6914	11651
<b>Arkansas</b>				
Little Rock	-Democrat (82,156m)	-L. R. AFB TAC Airlift	6549	11,548
	AK Gazette (139,448m) -deleted in random sample-	Camp JT Robinson	358	
<b>California</b>				
Bakersfield	Californian	n/a		
Fresno	-Bee (141,396m)	-LeMoore NAS Attack Air	6618	39,173
Long Beach	-Press Telegram (124,506m/4,966e)	-Terminal Islnd	15,697	1371
Los Angeles	-LA Examiner (240,129m)	-LA AFB Space Division	4152	194
	LA Times	n/a - national		
Modesto	Bee	n/a		
Oakland	-Tribune (151,669m)	-Alameda NAS Support Air	18,981	2616



Orange County/Santa Ana	-Register (307,776d)	-El Toro Marine C Jet Training/Ops	12,96	5220
Riverside	-Press-Enterp (14,094m)	-March AFB Air Refueling	5796	7379
Sacramento	-Bee (245,377m)	-Mather AFB Fight Training	5071	5845
	-Union (90,888)	-McClellan AFB Air Logistics	19557	3845
San Bernardino	County Sun (82,413m) -deleted in random sampling-	Norton AFB	9267	2339
San Diego	-Union (262,686m)	-Miramar NAS Early Warning	25,233	47,864
	-Tribune (122,577e)	-N. Island NAS Operational	37,167	1510
San Francisco	-Chronicle (568,088m)	-Presidio Training	5739	177
	-Examiner (142,335e)	-Mare Island Shipyard Repair/Logistics Spt	10,411	5621
San Jose	Mercury News	n/a		
Santa Rosa	Press Democrat	n/a		
Torrance	Copley Newspapers	n/a		
Walnut Creek	Contra Costa Times	n/a		
<b>Colorado</b>				
Colorado Springs	-Gazette-Teleg (105,666m)	-Fort Carson Infantry Mechanized	22,457	137,391
Denver	-Post (227,105m)	-Fitzsimons Army Med Health Care	3406	577
	-Rocky Mtn New (347,778m)	-Lowry AFB Technical Training	8719	5529

<b>Connecticut</b>					
Bridgeport	Post	n/a			
Hartford	Courant	n/a			
New Haven	-Register	-New London NB			
<b>Deleware</b>					
Wilmington	-News-Journal (118,253m/e)	-Dover AFB Airlift	6719		
<b>District of Columbia</b>					
	USA Today	n/a-national			
	Washington Post	n/a-national			
	-Times (104,890m)	-Bolling AFB			
<b>Florida</b>					
Daytona Beach	News-Journal	n/a			
Ft Lauderdale	Sun-Sentinel	n/a			
Jacksonville	-FL TimesUnion (160,405m)	-Jacksonville NAS Patrol	14,751	12,376	
Miami	-Herald (437,233m)	-Homestead AFB Tactical Fighters	5803	3405	
Orlando	-Sentinel (258,915d)	-O. Nav Tng Center Recruit/Training	16,826	2057	
St Petersburg	Times	n/a			
Sarasota	Herald-Tribune	n/a			
Tampa	-Tribune (271,288m)	-MacDill AFB Tactical Training			
W. Palm Beach	Post	n/a			
<b>Georgia</b>					
Atlanta	-Constitution (264,812m)	-Ft McPherson	33,136	505	
	-Journal (188,617e)	-A. NAS Reserve Air Tng	2770	165	
Savannah	-News-Press (75,972)	-Hunter Army Airfield Infantry Training	4227	5651	

<b>Hawaii</b>				
Honolulu	Advertiser (95,437m) -deleted arbitrarily in sampling-	Schofield Barracks Infantry Division	14,684	13,777
	Star-Bulletin (98,485) -deleted arbitrarily in sampling-	NAVSTA Pearl Harb Operational	13,558	5846
<b>Idaho</b>	n/a			
<b>Illinois</b>				
Chicago	-Sun-Times (612,686m)	Glenview NAS Reserve Training	4642	1407
	-Tribune (758,464m)	-Great Lakes NAV Recruit/Skill Tng	26,536	1012
Peoria	-Journal-Star (99,197d)	-P. ANG	252	137
<b>Indiana</b>				
Indianapolis	-Star (221,001m)	-Nav Avionic Ctr Avionics Repair	3242	185
	-News (124,292e)	-Ft Benjamin Harrison Personnel Mgmt	9946	2501
South Bend	Tribune	n/a		
<b>Iowa</b>				
DesMoines	-Register (221,869m)	-I. ANG Tactical Fighters	334	113
<b>Kansas</b>				
Wichita	-Eagle (128,865m)	-McConnell AFB Air Refueling	4628	41,555
<b>Kentucky</b>				
Lexington	-Herald-Leader (116,582m)	-Blue Grass Army Depot Logistics Depot	2543	780
Louisville	-CourierJournal (237,660m/e)	-Fort Knox Training	30,517	109,220
<b>Louisiana</b>				
Baton Rouge	Morning Advocate	n/a		
New Orleans	-Times Picayune (278,248d)	-N.O. NAS Reserve Air Training	14,421	4921
Shreveport	-Times (77,052m)	-Barksdale AFB Bomb Wing	7856	22,382

<b>Maine</b>				
Bangor	Daily News (77,795m) -deleted during random sampling-	Maine ANG	447	301
Portland	Press-Herald	n/a		
<b>Maryland</b>				
Baltimore	-Morning Sun (223,334m)	-Fort Meade HQ/Administration	27,761	13457
	-Evening Sun (187,304e)	-Martin State ANG Tactical Fighters	471	78
<b>Massachusetts</b>				
Boston	Christian Sci Mon	n/a-national		
	Globe (500,106m) -deleted during random sampling-	S. Boston Supply Ac Reserve component	1985	14
	-Herald (355,494m)	-Hanscom AFB Electronic Systems	5257	1075
Quincy	Patriot-Ledger	n/a		
Worcester	Evening-Gazette	n/a		
<b>Michigan</b>				
Detroit	-Free Press (639,720m)	-Tank Arsenal R&D-Tank Production	6615	261
	-News (686,787d)	-Saginaw AGB TFV	1578	3701
Flint	Journal	n/a		
Grand Rapids	Press	n/a		
<b>Minnesota</b>				
Minneapolis	-Star-Tribune (382,832m)	-M. ANG Tactical Airlift	736	300
St Paul	-Pioneer Press-Dispatch (see above) (188,448d)			
<b>Mississippi</b>	n/a			

<b>Missouri</b>				
Kansas City	-Times (285,962m)	-Richards-Gebaur ARS Tactical Fighters	649	629
	-Star (195,644e)	-Fort Leavenworth Command/staff college	6935	6995
St Louis	-Post-Dispatch (357,314)	-Scott AFB HQ Military Airlift	10,510	15,676
<b>Montana</b>				
	n/a			
<b>Nebraska</b>				
Omaha	-World-Herald (222,053m/e)	-Offutt AFB HQ Strategic Air Cmd	15,650	3884
<b>Nevada</b>				
Las Vegas	-ReviewJournal (114,269d)	-Nellis AFB Tactical Fighters	11,051	3,124,302
<b>New Hampshire</b>				
	n/a			
<b>New Jersey</b>				
Asbury Park	Asbury Park Press	n/a		
Atlantic City	Press (81,129m) -deleted during random sampling-	A. C. ANG Fighter Interceptors	350	386
Camden	Courier-Post	n/a		
Hackensack	Record	n/a		
Newark	Star-Ledger (461,080m)	Fort Monmouth R&D HQ	11,807	637
<b>New Mexico</b>				
Albuquerque	Journal (105,182m) -deleted during random sampling-	Kirtland AFB Combat Crew Training	9413	43,881
<b>New York</b>				
Albany	-Times-Union (89,049m)	-Watervliet Arsenal R&D, Artillery Production	2115	140
Buffalo	News	n/a		
Long Island	Newsday	n/a		
Middletown	Times Herald/Record	n/a		
Brooklyn	Daily Challenge	n/a		

New York	-Daily News (1,278,118m)	-Fort Hamilton Admin/Logistics	898	177
	-Post (740,123d)	-N Y Navsta		
	Times	n/a-national		
	Wall Street Journal	n/a-national		
Staten Island	Advance	n/a		
Rochester	Democrat-Chron	n/a		
Syracuse	Post-Standard (84,877m)	Hancock Field ANG	418	718
	-deleted during random sampling-			
	-Herald-Journal (101,980e)	-Griffiss AFB		
White Plains	Reporter	n/a		
<b>North Carolina</b>				
Charlotte	Observer (218,501m)	C. AGS Tactical Airlift	326	69
Greensboro	News-Record	n/a		
Raleigh	News/Observer	n/a		
Winston Salem	Journal	n/a		
<b>North Dakota</b>	n/a			
<b>Ohio</b>				
Akron	Beacon-Journal	n/a		
Cincinnati	Enquirer	n/a		
	Post	n/a		
Cleveland	-Plain Dealer (452,343)	-Navy Finance Ctr Administr Support	1679	36
Columbus	Dispatch (257,638m)	Rickenbacker AFB ANG	5959	2327
Dayton	-Daily News (196,417m)	-Wright Patterson AFB Logistic Cmd HQ	25,524	8312
Toledo	Blade (160,835e)	T. ANG Tactical Fighters	286	79

Youngstown	Vindicator (95,974e) -deleted during random sampling-	Y. MAP ARS Tactical Fighters	377	395
<b>Oklahoma</b>				
Okla. City	-DailyOklahoman (242,214m)	-Tinker AFB Air Logistics	30,309	4766
Tulsa	Tribune (75,710e)	T IAP ANG Tactical Fighters	298	78
	World (131,816m)	(see above)		
<b>Oregon</b>				
Portland	Oregonian (321,677d)	P. IAP AGS	720	394
<b>Pennsylvania</b>				
Harrisburg	-PatriotEveNews (104,500m/e)	-Ft Indiantown Gap Training	5937	18,042
Philadelphia	-Inquirer (508,496m)	-Naval Shipyard Ship Building/Repair	21,432	904
	-Daily News (259,381e)	-Willow Grove NAS Reserve Air Training	7310	967
Pittsburgh	Post-Gazette (168,444m)	P.IAP AGS Air Refueling	935	596
	Press (232,887e)	(see above)		
<b>Rhode Island</b>				
Providence	-Journal (93,578m)	-RI ANG		
	Bulletin (110,180e)	(see above)		
<b>South Carolina</b>				
Charleston	-News Courier (73,427m) (plus Eve Post 39,000e)	-Charleston AFB		
Columbia	-State (140,000m)	-Ft Jackson Army Training		
Greenville	News	n/a		

<b>South Dakota</b>	n/a			
<b>Tennessee</b>				
Knoxville	News-Sentinel (102,340m)	TN ANG		
Memphis	-Commercial Ap (224,248m)	-Memphis NAS Skill Training	13,814	3499
Nashville	Tennessean (119,120m) -deleted during random sampling-	N. Metro AGS Tactical Airlift	381	85
<b>Texas</b>				
Amarillo	Daily News	n/a		
Austin	-American State. (166,919d)	-Bergstrom AFB Tactical Reconnaissance	5725	3972
Dallas	-Morning-News (390,987m)  -Times-Herald (246,370d)	-D. NAS Reserve Air Training  (see above)	8289	799
Fort Worth	-Star-Telegram (266,911m/e)	-Carswell AFB Bomb Wing	5987	3426
Houston	Chronicle (406,084d)  Post (314,581m)	Ellington AGS Fighter Interceptors  (see above)	415	215
San Antonio	-Express-News (178,812d)  -Light (142,050d)	-Kelly AFB Air Logistics  -Ft Sam Houston Med Training HQ	24,311  20,480	4706  3159
<b>Utah</b>				
Salt Lake City	Tribune (112,817m)	SL City IAP AGS Air Refueling	361	102
<b>Vermont</b>	n/a			
<b>Virginia</b>				
Norfolk, VA Beach, Portsmouth, Chesapeake	-Virginia Pilot Ledger Star (144,224m) (79,043e)	-Norfolk NAS Operational	18,489	1386



Richmond	-Times-Dispatch (139,667m)	-Fort Lee Quartermstr School	14,233	5633
	News-Leader (109,103e)	IAP ANG Tactical Fighters	305	143
Roanoke	Times/World News	n/a		
Washington Seattle	-PostIntelligenc (203,726m)	-Bangor NAS		
	-Times (231,207e)	(see above)		
Spokane	-Spokesman-Rev (86,321m)	-Fairchild AFB Bomb Wing	5328	5955
Tacoma	-News-Tribune (116,646e)	-Fort Lewis	33,475	86,451
<b>W. Virginia</b>				
Wisconsin Madison	W.State Journal (79,269m)	Truax Field AGS Tactical Fighters	328	150
	Sentinel (188,988m)	Mitchell Fld AGS Air Refueling	733	166
	Journal (289,254e)	(see above)		

**Key:**

State Name				
City Name	Newspaper name (circulation)	Military Installation (mission)	#Employed	#Acres

Dash by names of newspapers and military installations indicates those interviews that were incorporated into survey results. Those not indicated were deleted if counterpart installation was unavailable or if a respondent was not available for comment.

## Appendix 4

## REPORTERS CODEBOOK

LINK	COLUMN/ QUEST. #	VARIABLE NAME/ (VARIABLE LABEL)	VALUES
--	1-3/0	CASEID	odd numbers
info	4/1	BEAT/ Beat Allocation	(1) only defense (2) part-time defense
H3	5/2	DEFCOMP/ Defense complexity	*(1) strongly agree (2) agree (3) disagree (4) strongly disagree
H3	6/3	OBSTACLE	*
SK	7/4	SKNEED Need for Specialized Know	*
H3	8-12/5	RANKS/ Ranked by difficulty	**1 = environment 2 = education 3 = defense 4 = science 5 = politics
H3	13-17/6	SKRANKS/ Ranked by specialized knowledge need	**
H3	--/7	(see other table)	
H4	18/8	INTERV/	*(1) frequently (2) sometimes (3) rarely (4) never
H4	19/8	PRESSREL/ use of press release	*
H4	20/8	INQUIRY/ inquiry of public ofcls	*
H4	21/8	PRESCONF/ use of press conference	*
H4	22/9	OTRREP/ use of other reporters	*
H4	23/9	MILOFCL/	*

		<i>inquiry of military ofcls</i>	
H4	24/9	OTRNEWS/ use of other news articles	*
H4	25/9	TRADEJ/ use of specialty-trade journals	*
H4	26/10	DOCUMENT/ percent document resch	(1) 0-20 (2) 21-60 (3) 61-80 (4) 81-100
INFO	27/11	GENSPEC/ self-perception	(1) generalist (2) specialist
H1	28/12	ACCURACY news quality perception	*(1) strongly agree (2) agree (3) disagree (4) strongly disagree
H1	29/13	COMP/ News comprehensiveness	*
H1	30/14	CLARITY/ news quality perception	*
H1	31/15	OBJECTIVITY/ news quality perception	*
H1	32/16	INTEREST/ news quality perception	*
H2	--/17	(not coded)	
H2	33/18	PAONAME/	(1) correct (2) incorrect
H2	34/19	COOP/ Cooperativeness	*(1) strongly agree (2) agree (3) disagree (4) strongly disagree
H2	35/20	ADVERS/ Adversarialness	*
H2	36/21	RESPPAO/ respect for PAO	*
H2	37/22	TRUSTPAO trust of PAO	*

H2	38/23	CONTACT/ frequency of contact	*
SK/Q	39/24	MILNAME/ name of closest instal	(1) correct (2) incorrect
SK/Q	40/25	MISSION/ mission of installation	(1) correct (2) incorrect
SK/Q	41/26	EMPLOYE/ number employed at instal	(1) correct (2) incorrect
SK/Q	42/27	CMDR/ commander of installation	(1) correct (2) incorrect
SK/Q	--/28	(not coded)	
SK	43-44/29	JOUREXP/ years with newspaper	00 - 50 years
SK	45-46/30	BEATEXP/ years on beat	00 - 50 years
P	47-48/31	REPAGE/ respondent age	18 - 90 years
SK/P	49/32	REPED/ respondent education	(1) high school (2) some college (3) undergrad. degree (4) some grad work (5) grad degree
SK/P	50/33	REPUNMAJ/ undergrad major	(1) journalism related (2) military related (3) other
SK/P	51/34	REPGMAJ/ graduate major	(1) journalism related (2) military related (3) other
SK	52-3/35	MILEXP/ time in military	00 - 30
SK	54/36	MIDTNG mid-career training	(1) yes (2) no
P	55/37	REPSEX/ respondent sex	(1) male (2) female

## Appendix 5

### PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICERS CODEBOOK

LINK	COLUMN/ NUMBER	VARIABLE NAME/ (VARIABLE LABEL)	VALUES
	56	(blank)	
INFO	57/3	NEWSPID/ local newspaper ID	(1) correct (2) incorrect
INFO	58/4	REPID/ local beat reporter	(1) correct (2) incorrect
H2	59/5	CONFREQ/ contact frequency	(1) week or more (2) >weekly<monthly (3) >monthly<3mths (4) less often (5) no answer
SK	60/6	REPSK/	*(1) strongly agree (2) agree (3) disagree (4) strongly disagree (5) no answer
H2	61/7	REPCOOP/ cooperativeness	*
H2	62/8	RADVERS/ adversarialness	*
H2	63/9	RESREP/ respect of reporter	*
H2	64/10	TRUSTREP/ trust of reporter	*
H1	65/11	ACURACYP/ news coverage accuracy	*
H1	66/12	COMPP/ news comprehensiveness	*
H1	67/13	CLARITYP/ news clarity	*

H1	68/14	OBJECTIP/ news objectivity	*
H1	69/15	INTERESP/ interesting coverage	*
H1	70/16	DEFCOV/ overall coverage rating	*(1) very good (2) good (3) neutral (4) bad (5) very bad
H2	71/17	RAPPORT/ overall rapport rating	*
P	--/18	(not coded)	
P	72-3/19	SVSEXP/ service experience	00 - 99 years
P	74/20	EDLEVEL/ respondent education	(1) high school (2) undergraduate wrk (3) undergrad degree (4) graduate work (5) graduate degree
P	75/21	UMAJOR/ respondent und major	*(1) journ related (2) military related (3) other
P	76/22	GMAJOR/	*
P	77-78/23	PAOAGE/ respondent age	00 - 99
P	79/24	PSEX/	(1) male (2) female

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This thesis was typed by the author in collaboration with Longhorn Copies.